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NEW STATESMAN

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Plutonium and Politics

For several months, a decision of immense importance has been in the balance: should Britain embark on the construction of fast-breeder nuclear power stations? Behind the technical complexities, it can be summarily but accurately said that the question is about plutonium – the most potent and dangerous of all elements, and an element which (unlike uranium) does not occur in nature, but is brought into existence by processes dependent on human volition. In nuclear installations of the type developed over the past 20 years, plutonium is used and largely used up. In the fast-breeder, plutonium is continuously created on a considerable scale. Britain, or any other country committed to such development, would come into possession of a cosmic time-bomb. Every year, the accumulated stock of surplus plutonium would be sufficient to blow the world to smithereens.

President Carter has now stated that the United States will not pursue a fast-breeder programme, and the inference is that he seeks to discourage such a venture by other nations. His pronouncement contains certain ambiguities, and he assumes a more intensive concentration on nuclear systems other than fast-breeders. This will be unwelcome to American environmentalists and will be seen by other nations as a cheap claim to virtue; with plenty of uranium, the US can forgo plutonium more easily than Britain or France. Yet, when these reservations are made, the significant fact is that we are given a welcome and possibly unique opportunity to respond to an American lead and abstain from a fatal course.

Once fast-breeders are built, it is almost inevitable that both the technology and the material will be exported to a variety of second-rank industrial powers, who will then easily be able to make the nuclear weapons of which plutonium is the vital ingredient. Among these countries, there are several with openly aggressive intentions toward their neighbours, and several under extremely unstable and capricious leadership. The Non-Proliferation Treaty, which (to an imperfect extent) prevents the acquisition of nuclear weapons in a perfected and easily identifiable form, could be circumvented here, there and everywhere.

Even if world peace is preserved, there remains the awful danger of an accidental 'escape' of the constantly growing stocks of plutonium. Wherever they are buried, their security can be guaranteed only by the continued vigilance and unchallenged authority exerted by settled and responsible societies. Now, the element remains noxious to human life for 100,000 years. We should bear in mind that civilisation, of any kind, is no more than 6,000 years old. The hope of security over an extended period is presumptuous to a terrifying degree; what would have happened to stocks of plutonium stored in the Roman catacombs under the apparently stable and impregnable political system over which the Emperor Trajan presided? If historians are accused of not knowing much about science, it is also fair to ask scientists to take into account the warnings of history. In the Britain of 1977, the lobby pressing for the fast-breeder programme – headed by the Atomic Energy Authority – is an extremely powerful one, amounting to a military-industrial complex in itself.

The chosen strategy is to alarm us with the prospect of an energy shortage in the 1990's. In fact, unexpected new reserves of coal are in the early stages of extraction, and precedent suggests that the potential riches of North Sea oil will far exceed those located so far. As to this, it would be wrong to be complacent or dogmatic, but equally wrong to take the forecasts of shortages as certainties.

Mr Benn, the Minister responsible, has refused to be rushed and has subordinated his decision to a process of debate, open to all informed interests and – in accordance with Bennite principles – to citizens at large. That is admirable, no doubt; what worries us is that the issue may still be open when Mr Benn is no longer Secretary for Energy and a Tory government proves itself more amenable to the pressures of the interests which stand to profit from such a vast construction programme. The sooner fast-breeders are ruled out of court, the sooner we shall feel safe.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Thatcher Peking Style

FENTON: Good morning. Are you getting sick of your Member? If so, what can you do about it? We shall be discussing this problem later in the column, and talking to some people who have got rid of their members – asking them what the procedure is, whether they're satisfied with the result, what they're going to do about it now. But first, Spotlight has sent a special team to Peking to follow Mrs Thatcher on her tour. Here now, direct from the Chinese capital by satellite, is their report:

(*Telephone rings.*) Hello. Yes. Yes. Ah, well, I'm afraid there appears to be some kind of hitch and, ah, we hope to bring you the report later. In the meantime, Bryan Magee is here in the studio to explain just what *was* so interesting and new about that Manifesto Group pamphlet. Bryan Magee, you're a pretty pompous individual – call yourself a philosopher, fancy yourself as God's gift to social democracy, always writing letters to the press. Just what makes you tick? That's what *I* want to know, and I'm sure a lot of our viewers would be interested too.

MAGEE: Yes well, I'd like to make it clear at the outset –

FENTON: I'm sorry, I'll have to cut you off there and go straight over to Lobby Hack in Peking.

HACK: . . . already made her mark. Mrs Thatcher spent the morning trailing round the Temple of Unmutterable Boredom asking quite intelligent questions about everything she saw, and impressing her hosts with her stamina. Her speech at today's banquet was full of those witty, personal touches for which she is rapidly becoming famous all over the world, and it went down very well with an audience which rarely, if ever, gets a chance to hear so many anti-Chinese jokes in one afternoon. (*Shot of blank Chinese faces, pan to Thatcher reading large sheaf of notes.*)

THATCHER: Mr Chairman, I must say that – aha – when you invited me here, I was very much afraid to reply by telephone, because I've always been told that in China – aha – there are so many people called *Wing* and *Wong* – aha – that it's easy to *wing* the *wong* number! Mr Chairman, you will no doubt know that the Russians have called me the Iron Lady! (*Thunderous applause. Ten minute ovation.*) Well, all I can say is – aha – I don't mind admitting that there are one or two *chinks* in my armour. I wonder, Mr Chairman, whether you've ever heard the one – and I must say I hadn't until Patrick Cosgrave told me, but I do think it's awfully good – the one about the Chinaman who was camping in England when his tent blew away, and this Englishman comes up to him and says 'What time is it?' and the Chinaman says, '*Tent wenty*.' And then – aha – the same little chappie goes to the dentist and – aha – the receptionist asks him what time his appointment is supposed to be, and the Chinaman says '*Tooth hurty!*' Mr Chinaman, um I mean Mr Chairman, I think that these sort of anecdotes illustrate the sort of mutual understanding there has always been between our two countries. Times change of course. Once you had Boxer Risings. Now we have Boxer Shorts. (Douglas, who wrote this?) But I think I can safely say, without fear of provoking a *Yangtse incident*, that . . .

FENTON: Well, that was Mrs Thatcher in Communist China. But here in Britain, is there a threat of a communist takeover in the Labour Party? Is it right that constituency parties should be able to get rid of their members, as well as choose them? Does the constituency party have a right to any say in the matter at all? With me in the studio is Edward Lyons, MP for Bradford West, whose constituency party has been giving him a spot of bother. Edward Lyons, you were treated very sycophantically by *Man Alive* last Tuesday. How much did you pay for that?

LYONS: I beg you pardon, I thoroughly resent the suggestion that I . . .

FENTON: All right, all right, keep your hair on. Seriously though, just what is your complaint about the way you've been treated by your CLP?

LYONS: Well, you see, they cause such a lot of work. Every time I do something in Parliament, I have to phone people up and explain what it is that I've done, and why. And then at the weekends, I have to go to my constituency and work for the Labour Party in order to get more people to join it. It's very hard work, you know, being an MP, quite a full-time job, without having to waste time on party politics.

FENTON: But aren't you supposed to be a Labour MP? I mean, isn't this what being a member of a party is all about? Or am I being totally naive?

LYONS: I think you are. The point is, I was elected by a large number of voters, most of whom have no interest at all in what goes on in Labour Party meetings. They are the people I represent. It's quite unfair that a small group of politically motivated men should have the right to get rid of me, just because they don't agree with me. The voters of Bradford agree with me, and that's what counts.

FENTON: But my dear chap, the voters of Bradford elected you *as a member* of the Labour Party. Surely they expect you to be bound by normal party discipline. For instance, you normally obey the whip in Parliament, don't you? I should have thought that responsiveness to one's constituency party comes into the same category. What's more, if they wanted to get rid of you as their candidate in the next election, surely they have every right to do so?

LYONS: You don't understand. These people aren't *real* Labour Party members at all. They're communist agitators, out to turn the party into a totalitarian, Marxist, Trotskyist, Stalinist, Maoist organisation which has nothing to do with the Labour Party. They're against democracy.

FENTON: But I thought their whole movement to date had been built within the democratic processes of the Labour Party, such as they are. What's wrong with that?

LYONS: Democratic processes? Are you aware of the way they work – the bedsitter brigade, the takeovers of wards, the national organisation devoted to coordination of activities?

FENTON: None of which sounds much different from the way the Campaign for Democratic Socialism behaved in the past. This point about bedsitters interests me, since it represents a curious new form of snobbery for Labour. What is the objection to bedsitters? Are you proposing a property qualification for membership of the party, by any chance?

MAGEE: Perhaps I might be allowed to come in here?

FENTON: Bryan Magee.

MAGEE: And say that the Labour Party has always been a broad church.

FENTON: Ian Mikardo, what do you think of that? Is the Labour Party a broad church?

MIKARDO: Now wait a minute young man, don't put words into my mouth. I never said the Labour Party was a broad church. What I said was –

FENTON: I never suggested you said that the Labour Party was a broad church.

MIKARDO: No I didn't.

FENTON: I'm sorry. What –

MIKARDO: There you go again. That's the third time on this programme that remarks have been attributed to me which bear no relation to what I've actually said. Now if you'll just listen a moment and not try to butt in, what I actually said was in no way different from what the Labour Party has been doing for the last fifty years. Take my constituency party, for instance, Tower Hamlets. Now if any of these *Militant* jonnies came along and tried their little tricks in Tower Hamlets, my boys would come down on them like a ton of bricks. You see, we've got it all sewn up properly. And what I say to Edward Lyons is . . .

FENTON: Ian Mikardo, thank . . .

MIKARDO: Wait a minute. I haven't finished yet, young man. What I say is –

(*Music, Fade.*)

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Mary Holland

How the Irish Treat the Irish

Last weekend's spate of firebombs in Dublin shops were immaculately timed to be of maximum political value to the Irish Government. As soon as news of the first one flashed across television screens here it was assumed to be the work of Provisional IRA militants protesting about the 20 Provo prisoners who are now all in military hospital in the sixth week of a hunger strike protesting about conditions in Portlaoise prison.

The fact that the man arrested by the Dublin police after an incendiary device had exploded in his pocket turned out to be a member of the Ulster Defence Association may cast interesting light on the hitherto unsuspected sophistication of Protestant extremist leadership in the North but it has not really altered people's initial reaction here – that the bombs, the hunger strikers, the violent scenes outside Portlaoise are all part and parcel of the Northern troubles, alien and threatening to the lives of decent, law-abiding, peace-loving Southerners.

The bombs came just as the voice of the liberal centre, long silent here, was beginning to become ever so slightly audible on the issue about which the hunger-strikers are protesting. The Irish papers, which are particularly vulnerable to the charge which springs readily to the lips of cabinet ministers here that any criticism of the present Government's stance on civil liberties is Provisional IRA propaganda, were just beginning to square up to the fact that they must begin to investigate what was going on inside Portlaoise.

It's not easy to establish facts either about the prison itself, or about the hunger-strikers. As part of their protest they are refusing medical attention and examination by prison doctors, and the Government in its turn is refusing to give any information about individual prisoners or to allow their families to visit them. A slight concession on this, that relatives would be allowed to visit if they promised to try and persuade individual prisoners to give up the hunger strike, has not so far been taken up. Frank Stagg, brother of Joe Stagg who died on hunger strike in England, has been quoted as saying that visits made under such circumstances are too harrowing for both parties involved.

It is even more difficult for journalists here to write about the primary issue involved – conditions inside the prison – as the Government has been quite adamant in its refusal to discuss the subject or to allow usually respectable outsiders to visit the jail. There's no nonsense here about allowing a Lord Longford figure in to report back and assuage liberal concern, which – given the absence of any very visible liberal concern – is perhaps not surprising. Those who have been refused include the Catholic Bishop of Derry and the Rev. Ian Paisley as well as eminent southerners. This means that any account of conditions in the prison relies on the statements of ex-prisoners or of lawyers, doctors and priests who are seen as being too close to the Provos for most newspaper editors, fearful of the lash of Conor Cruise O'Brien's tongue.

Even so, a pattern has been emerging from their statements and it is one of vindictive and constant petty humiliation. The favourite method of prison control within Portlaoise appears to be the strip search. This involves six or seven prison warders stripping a prisoner in his cell, examining his genitals and probing his anus for explosives. Ex-prisoners claim that this can

'This parrot is definitely deceased. It has passed on, passed away. It has ceased to be. It is no more. It's a stiff. He's snuffed it, bereft of life, indubitably extinct. This is an ex-parrot!'

(Monty Python's Flying Circus)

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happen several times a day and that if a prisoner resists he is punished with solitary confinement. In Portlaoise this means being locked barefoot in a cell which during the day has no furniture at all and a mattress at night. Solitary confinement, which of course brings with it a loss of all privileges, like visits and letters, has recently been given for offences like talking in church or switching a light on or off. There are also complaints about the lack of any privacy during visits, and of visits being denied completely to some families.

For their part, the authorities insist that these measures are necessary for security reasons, to meet the problems involved in dealing with over 100 very tough, politically notivated prisoners who are kept in one place rather than dispersed, as in England, and who have caused violent trouble and at least one mass breakout in the past. Strip searches have to be carried out, they say, because explosives have been smuggled out of the prison strapped to the genitals of a prisoner who later used them to blast an escape route for himself and several others out of the special Criminal Court. Similarly visits have to be severely restricted, with no physical contact between prisoners and their families because explosives have also been smuggled in on at least one occasion by a woman who carried them in her vagina.

Whether these security precautions also make it necessary to strip-search a prisoner who is in solitary confinement in a bare cell several times a day is something which the authorities refuse to discuss. And it is probable that all this does need to be viewed in the context of a prison system which is still fiercely rooted in a philosophy of retribution rather than any fancy ideas about rehabilitation. Life for non-political prisoners in Irish jails is not very pleasant either. Crime and punishment in Ireland still mean sin and expiation to most people. The age of criminal responsibility is seven years, which is the age when a Catholic child customarily makes his first confession admitting guilt for sins committed.

Quite apart from all these reasons for the lack of any particular public concern about the Provisional hunger-strikers, there is also the fact that what is going on in Portlaoise and the Curragh military hospital where the hunger-strikers are held, does seem like very familiar ground to both parties to the confrontation and to the general public. There is a certain cynicism, even among those who may disapprove of conditions in Portlaoise, that there have been hunger strikes and ritual posturings before, that a compromise will be effected which will save both the lives of the hunger-strikers and the dignity of the authorities.

Such a convenient solution may prove rather more difficult to arrange than usual this time around. The Provos for their part are desperately anxious to arouse public sympathy in the South, not simply for their campaign in the North, but on the whole issue of the Government's anti-IRA measures, including the clampdown on their spokesmen on TV and radio. They know that a hunger strike, particularly a mass protest like this one, is still a potent weapon in Ireland which could stir emotions, even among people who would normally abhor the IRA's violence, and which the Government would find it hard to ignore, particularly in an election year. The Government, which sees the hunger strike as part of the threat posed by the Provisional IRA to the very institutions of the state, is equally determined that the challenge will be met head on. The Minister of Justice, Patrick Cooney, has already made it grimly clear that there will be no concessions to the strikers and that any effects 'adverse to life' will be the responsibility of those who ordered the strike in the first place. It will be very difficult for him to retreat from this position – and equally difficult for the Provisionals to retreat from theirs.

Dublin

Neal Ascherson

How Sleep the Brave?

'Fell Asleep in Middle of Sex Attack', said the headline of the month in Scotland. 'Ah'm the greatest since Bible John,' thundered the rapist at his elderly victim. After failing to achieve all kinds of illegal entry to her person, he lost interest and dozed off.

He added another to the modern Scottish joke-book, which isn't about bawbees and what happens under kilts but concerns the collision of gigantic aspirations, bungling technical incompetence and gnawing lack of conviction. Too close to the Irish joke for Scottish comfort. But see all those Glasgow bank robberies in which the bandit roars that he's the greatest since Billy the Kid, catches his trouser-leg on the spike of the counter grille and breaks his ankle. What has happened to those perfectionist engineers and meticulous Caledonian surgeons, one would like to know?

There seemed to be a strong chance that Scots might fall asleep in the middle of the devolution exercise. Not out of boredom, like the English backbenches at Westminster, but out of gloom flooding in after the Scotland and Wales Bill broke down over the guillotine motion in February. This has happened before. When the 1950 Covenant demanding a Scottish Parliament was signed by more than half the Scottish electorate, many of whom signed only once, Mr Attlee with Mr Churchill's support told the petition-bearers to get lost. They did so. After a brief wrangle over the leadership, the Covenant campaign found that their weapon had come to pieces in their hands. In London, nothing more was head of them.

So it might have been with the Devolution Bill. The Government's smash-up over the guillotine motion showed that the House of Commons wanted Scottish devolution – in this form, at least – to get lost. There was a chance that the Scottish public, to whom the word 'devolution' had already become a tarnished expression with connotations of more bureaucracy, talking-shops, shabby compromises and a surcharge on the rates, might once again slink obediently back to its kennel. There to twitch in dreams of self-government which disturbed nobody's sleep.

But that hasn't been what happened. After a period of turbid confusion, the political current of Scotland is once again clear, and it is setting harder and deeper than ever before towards the Nationalists. The evidence remains the smudgy imprints of opinion polls, party canvasses, attendance at meetings and personal impressions. Scotland, although it contains 71 seats, has been denied a parliamentary by-election since October 1974. But that is where the evidence points, and what is most striking about the resumption of the current towards the SNP is the deeper rather than the harder. The winter of squabbles over the Bill and its eventual breakdown on 22 February have scoured away some of the middle ground and inclined people to fear that they face a choice between independence or nothing whatever.

The Bill and the White Paper which preceded it were trying to interest national feeling in Scotland in a quite new solution. The mainstream Home Rule argument, as it has been repeated for the last 60 years and more, has rested on economic autonomy for Scotland, and especially control over the declining sector of heavy industry and extraction by a Scottish Parliament. The Bill suggested in effect that a Scottish Assembly was needed but for a quite different purpose: to improve democracy in a time of big government rather than to take charge of one part of what Whitehall insisted was a unitary economy. When the Bill was discredited this Ted Short/Michael Foot version of Home Rule was discredited too, and Scottish opinion has simply flowed back into its old stream bed.

People are now thinking about independence with sobriety and in detail. Scotland being what it is, this means that they are looking at the economics of self-government with attention to safety rather than to glamour. The *Glasgow Herald* has just completed a long series of full-page specialist articles on the prospects of an independent Scotland. Shortly after the district elections due early next month, the *Scotsman* will be serialising the *Scotland 1980* book edited by Professor Donald Mackay, which is said to bring a panel of economic experts to the conclusion that full independence would be a sensible and beneficial course for a Scottish Administration to follow.

Mr Alastair Hetherington's BBC-Scotland will be analysing the book in no fewer than five television instalments. A rather suspect SNP poll in some central-belt constituencies showed over half the sample in favour of a Scottish Parliament with full powers, whatever that can be held to mean, while the latest poll commissioned by the *Glasgow Herald* gave the SNP an unprecedented nine percentage points lead over all other parties in Scotland.

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What sort of independence, though? This is the discouraging part. So far, the calculations have been about how much disruption independence might bring, and what trade or diplomatic links might be rattled in the process. The conclusion is that if things are managed competently Scotland might emerge almost the same as she is today, only richer. Independence for other races has meant the approach of a millenium, a socialist paradise, a free republic of equals, a chance to make all things new and unrecognisably better. Scotland's pundits, in contrast, seem to treat their country as Panglossian physicians would treat a menopausal patient. This change is inevitable, they say, but there is no reason why hot flushes should last long or why normal sexual relations may not soon be resumed, and, my dear, after a few months you won't even remember that anything has changed at all. Scotland can keep a customs union with England and hold the Scots £ more or less in parity with sterling, and stay in Nato and preserve the profit margins of the insurance houses and multi-national corporations . . . just as if she were not independent at all.

Not a very big deal, for so much fuss. The English would probably find it easier to understand if the Scots wanted a Stuart Restoration or Jimmy Reid as Chairman of the Scottish Soviet. But the surface remains placid. The news reveals the usual RAF helicopters rescuing climbers in the Cairngorms, the usual chancers preparing to sell pilgrims to next month's clan gathering a square yard of soggy tundra in the Hebrides. Machinations down in London to reanimate and improve the Devolution Bill have not raised much interest here. The reality in Edinburgh is that work to convert the old Royal High School and St Andrew's House into the Assembly is stopping, and will take nearly a year to complete when and if the green light comes on again. It is the Government, in fact, which has fallen asleep on the job. The Scots are awake, but turning their thoughts away from slumbering devolution and more and more towards the next general election.

Edinburgh

Alexander Cockburn

Fast Food Americans

Let us desist for a moment from observation of Jimmy Carter's unsteady course and consider instead a most interesting change in American life over recent years, namely the steady decline in status of one of the greatest glories of postwar advertising and folklore: the American housewife's kitchen. I shall return to its harried occupant, now probably munching away at a fast food joint along with the children, but first a brief word about the new monarch of the gas range, the middle-class male gourmet.

Here the drone male now rules supreme, in his special uniform of striped butcher's apron and on special occasions a fine white toque. Alone and contented he can recreate the labour-intensive French cooking techniques of a half a century ago. Not so long ago I watched just such a drone friend of mine start to prepare demi-glace, the base for all classical French brown sauces. He began by smashing bones to pieces with a cleaver, wearing goggles to protect his eyes and covering his kitchen walls with newspaper to save the paint from flying fragments. Into the immense stockpot went gargantuan mounds of beef shin and veal shank. Simmer and skim, simmer and skim. Down the primrose path of truffle essence, larding needles and split pigs' feet he laboured towards a late capitalist bourgeois 'meal' in all its anachronistic splendour, finally served hours late to a tired wife and drunken guests: the entire complex repast a gift of the drone male to himself.

Meanwhile, beyond the walls of his playpen, real life proceeds. The great trend in the 1950s was the rationalisation of the housewife's kitchen and freezer, with labour-saving devices and frozen convenience foods. Large-scale food processing invaded the home and the ritual of the family meal. It is clear that this stage is over and the era of fast food consumption outside the home has truly begun. Ten years ago one out of every four meals was eaten outside the home. Now the ratio is one out of three. Soon it will be one out of two. While the proportion of their income that people spend on food has remained more or less constant, the amount spent on eating out has increased. By the late 1960s more than two million people were working in eating and drinking places (excluding hotels), whereas fewer people than ever were working in farming or food stores.

The tendency is to remove the meal from the home altogether. Put another way, businessmen have always tried to devise capital-intensive ways of getting food from the farms and greenhouses to the consumers' stomachs. The old method of distribution was through processing firms, retail outlets such as supermarkets, and thence to the home freezer. Now the intermediate outlets are all discarded and the food can go straight from the processor to the fast-food outlet. Thus the processor, along with the banks and insurance companies financing his activities, is the central cog in regulating the production and consumption of food. The farmer is essentially treated as a franchise-holder for the fast food outlet, and so through long-term contracts the processor can control the type and amount of crops grown.

Thus the rationalisation of the American meal is firmly established. Its content is dictated by the exigencies of fast food preparation: hamburger, chicken and to a much lesser extent pizza, tacos and fried fish. Dietetic results include the ingestion of much fried food, almost no vegetables. Vegetable oils have become the universal medium, instead of animal fat.

Already fast food accounts for about a quarter of all eating out expenses in the United States. Market analysts rejoice and recommend fast food stocks as a wise investment. 'Many of the sociological trends which some industry observers cite as potential stimulants towards a higher growth rate, particularly women in the labour force, would seem to indicate a shift towards non-recreational meals, which carry a lower price tag.'

The crucial phrases here are 'Women in the labour force' and 'Non-recreational meals'. A recent survey established that 40 per cent of fast food patrons ate out because no one had to cook it or clean up. Only 7 per cent said it was a way to enjoy good food. Children like fast food joints. Only the old fail to make regular appearances there. Many of them cannot afford more frequent visits, and the survey quoted above suggests that fast-food chains will have to cater to them more in the future – presumably by serving up a senior citizen's special of cheap minced entrails or high-class dog food.

And of course more and more women are working, therefore tending to eat out and abandoning the servitude of the kitchen. A year ago a government report remarked: 'The labour force has grown by 1.5 million over the last year, with adult women accounting for 1.1 million of this increase.' Between 1947 and 1975 the female population grew by 52 per cent and the female labour force shot up 123 per cent. The figures vary but the trend is clear: fewer women are having children, more women are getting divorced, women are living longer than man. City by city across the country the result is the same: an ever widening pool of women in the labour force. In 1950 the percentage of women of working age in the labour market was 33.9. In 1973 it was 44.7. Half the white-collar workers in the United States are now women and 78 per cent of all the clerical workers.

Since the Second World War one of the most significant booms in female participation in the labour force has been among married women. One out of every two married women living with their husbands now works. Plainly many women learned skills and gained working experience during the war. But also the introduction of household appliances and other consumer products made it possible for the woman to get her household work and child-caring tasks accomplished with enough time left to work on the outside. The treadmill thus established was the necessity to work in order to buy the labour-saving devices. The great boom in consumer financing in the

NEXT WEEK

V. S. Pritchett
on Gabriel García Márquez

Jonathan Dimbleby
on Southern Africa

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1950s hastened the treadmill, encouraging families to plunge into debt and in effect locking women into supplying a second outside job from within the family unit.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s American business was reorganising a two-tiered operation. On the one hand machines replaced men in heavy industry; on the other, back-up services expanded sharply. It is in this latter area, most expanding in the United States, that wages are below average. So one of the long-term trends is that the businessman tends to get the labour of two people for the price of one. Poorly-paid husbands need the income of even more poorly-paid wives. In 1972 women earned 58 cents to every dollar earned by men, a drop from the ratio in the mid-1950s which was 64 cents to every dollar. The proportion fell because women, desperate to find the income necessary to meet the rising cost of living, took jobs with low wages and indeed jobs largely outside union control. The trend will accelerate as social welfare programmes are cut and the 'chisellers' forced into low-paying jobs.

Thus there emerges a profile of a vast new surplus labour force, increasingly replete with women and with cheap part-time workers. Child-care centres burgeon as part of the trend. And just as women enter this surplus labour pool, men join them from the ranks of regular jobs in industry and trade.

Small wonder then, against this backdrop, that the American housewife's kitchen has entered a decline, and along with it the American supermarket. For the affluent there is the drone male's playpen and playpans. The working woman increasingly nourishes herself and her children at the burger counter and the pizza hut, munching the non-recreational fodder in businesslike surroundings, liberated from the kitchen to the counter.

New York

Peter Wilby

Tidying the Classroom

Teachers do not care for disorderly classes. Teachers' leaders care still less for disorderly conferences. The executive of the National Union of Teachers therefore must have been well satisfied with the first three days of the union's annual conference this week. The delegates obediently passed all the main executive motions and memoranda, accepted amendments only when they were told to, applauded their leaders at suitable intervals and, as the president proudly announced during one session, extinguished their cigarettes when he indicated his disapproval. Things may be rough in the modern classroom, but in the peace of Eastbourne at Easter the NUT leader can play the old fashioned schoolmaster presiding over a model class beyond his wildest dreams. Angela Pope, though shouldst be filming at this hour.

Class control, of course, depends on good lesson preparation. And, when the NUT leaders foresaw restlessness at the back of the class, they were ready with appropriate compromises. There was a minor fracas over what, for the purposes of industrial action, should be regarded as an oversized class. The executive wanted to continue supporting members who refused to teach classes of more than 35; nearly half the conference thought the figure should be reduced to 30. In the end, an amendment was accepted empowering the executive to 'set a new realistic criterion for over-sized classes, which is less than 35 plus' – 33.72, perhaps. Since, as a former president Max Morris pointed, only half-a-dozen local associations in the whole country have asked for headquarters' permission to impose sanctions against classes of over 35, the debate seemed a bit academic.

Still, nobody was upset and class control was maintained. The executive wanted to make discipline even tighter. It succeeded in imposing postal ballots for elections of conference delegates and officers on all local associations. Then, it thinks, it might not even have the trouble of listening to dissidents from its extreme left-wing group, 'Rank and File.' The executive has already succeeded in changing union rules to prevent members, on pain of suspension, from taking industrial action without prior permission from headquarters. Thirty members in Newham who defied the rule last year were promptly suspended by Mr Fred Jarvis, the General Secretary.

There isn't much doubt that the NUT militants live in a world of revolutionary fantasy and illusion that is remarkable even by the generous standards of Trotskyist fictions. They believe, for example, that the NUT executive, as part of its campaign against teacher unemployment, should instruct all its members to refuse to teach classes of more than 30 from next September. The certain result would be the withdrawal of the instruction within a week amid a flood of resignations. By its more realistic strategy of approving limited sanctions (mainly refusal to take big classes of absent colleagues) in selected areas where local authorities have been cutting back on staffing, the NUT executive claims it has saved some 3,000 jobs. That may seem unimpressive against a total of more than 20,000 unemployed teachers, but anyone acquainted with the trade union movement's record on fighting unemployment will recognise it as in every way a remarkable achievement.

Yet if the union is to maintain and step up its campaign against the education cuts it must rely on enthusiasm. In its obsession with controlling the militants' potential for disruption, the NUT is in danger of losing that valuable asset. The union's leaders have a horror of dissident voices. They appear to believe that, just as a single recalcitrant child can disrupt a class of 35, so can a single Trotskyist voice, if it is allowed to continue ranting, disrupt a union of some 250,000 sober citizens. Hence, their determination to stamp out the already diminishing extreme left voice at the conference and their attempts to suppress any mention of the Rank and File group in the union's own journal.

But perhaps the NUT's dislike of internal criticism is its own affair. What matters far more to the rest of us is its dislike of external criticism. The conference's motion on the great debate gave not an inch to those who would like to see wider public influence if not control over the curriculum. It begged nearly every question that Shirley Williams has tried so painstakingly to raise in her series of regional conferences. 'Conference deplores the recent series of unjustified and ill-informed attacks on the work of the schools. It calls upon the Government, the local education authorities and all concerned with education to recognise that by making full use of increased educational opportunities teachers have taken a leading role in promoting the improvement of educational standards and responding to the rapidly changing needs of society.'

Does the NUT really believe that, on receipt of this motion, the Government will meekly apologise for its impertinence and admit that the entire Great Debate has been misconceived? The union's leaders appear not even to understand what the great debate is about. Mr Jarvis, in his address to the conference on Easter Monday, said that the acid test of the Government's activity was how much better the education provided for children would be at the end of the day. 'Will they be in smaller classes, better buildings, have more books and equipment?' No, Mr Jarvis, that is not the acid test. You have not been paying attention. The test is whether, no matter what the size of classes, state of the buildings or quantity of books and equipment, the children are actually learning anything. Again, Mr Jarvis said: 'The teaching profession is the most open of professions and the one most in rapport with its clientèle and with the community of the regional conferences. Have you heard or read nothing about the impact of Angela Pope's *Panorama* film, are you not aware that a school called William Tyndale revealed some lack of rapport between teachers and clientèle? Mr Jarvis's approach to criticism is to shout at it until it goes away.

The problem of the resources available to education dominated the Eastbourne conference. But the attitude of the NUT leaders to expenditure is as archaic as that of the First World War generals to military manpower: pour it in and never mind where it's going. If they want smaller classes, better buildings, more books and equipment they must demonstrate their ability and willingness to make the best possible use of them. There was more than a whiff of complacency about Eastbourne; there was an overpowering fug. It is a tenet of modern teaching theory that a little controlled disorder and dissidence in the classroom can lead to constructive results. The NUT leaders should take note.

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Peter Townsend

The Unrepentant Democratic Socialist

Belatedly, the Labour movement is discovering its debt to Barbara Wootton. Eighty years old this week, she remains an uncompromising and influential advocate of rationality, equality and non-violence in the conduct of human affairs. During her lifetime she has applied these principles with clarity and consistency while playing her different roles as democratic socialist, social scientist, feminist, magistrate, agnostic and public servant. Few successful people can have reached such advanced age with minds as razor-sharp, as responsive to changing conditions and as uncluttered by self-deceit, pomp and self-importance.

In 1919, at the age of 22, she gained a first class mark with distinction in the degree examinations for the Economics Tripos at Cambridge and was asked to teach in the university the following year. In 1922 she voluntarily abandoned the comfortable life of a Cambridge don to work for what was then the Joint Research Department of the TUC and the Labour Party; in the same year she became committed to adult education; at 27 she served on her first government committee, on the incidence of taxation; at 28, became a JP and at 29 was appointed Principal of Morley College for Working Men and Women. Before she was 30 the working pattern for virtually the next 50 years of her life was set.

One major theme of her work has been to spell out the case for democratic socialism not just with criticism of the existing order but with positive examples of how it might be achieved. After a short visit to Russia in the early 1930s she wrote *Plan or No Plan* (1934), which compared the shortcomings as well as advantages of the two economic systems. Then came *End Social Inequality* (1941), *Freedom Under Planning* (1945) and a steady stream of articles and pamphlets in the following 30 years, including articles on a visit to China in 1972.

What is evident from this work is her growing sense of paradox in the search for socialism. In the period up to the end of the Second World War she was principally concerned to expose inequality in Britain and to relate the theories of unplanned and planned economies to practice. This seemed a sufficient service to socialism. But in the 1960s and 1970s she became acutely aware of the failure of the politics of gradualism in many socialist democracies. In a paper first published in 1966 and later re-written for her autobiography, *In a World I Never Made* (1967), she recognises that, despite nationalisation, industries like coal and transport had to operate within the framework and conform to the norms of capitalist industry. Despite welfare legislation, class distinctions remained almost as pronounced as ever – not just in the social graces but in mortality rates and the self-interested resistance of different groups to real redistribution. Progress towards socialism had been slow and expectations disappointed:

> The inevitability of gradualness may be a safeguard against revolutionary violence; but it is also a guarantee against success . . . I used to think . . . that we could creep undisturbed, unnoticed even, step by step out of capitalism into socialism . . . Even in this country one became aware, in 1931 and again in 1964, that the limits of toleration of even mildly radical policies are narrow indeed. Here then is the great dilemma – the inescapable choice between the inefficiency of the old order and the human suffering involved in the revolutionary measures by which alone the new order could be established. For me the price of that suffering is too heavy to be paid.

But she did more than express a moral absolute at the end of a wry, and in some ways disconsolate analysis. One need not, she thought, resign oneself to the inefficiency of the old order. In the teeth of the disappointments of Labour rule, especially since 1964, she felt it right for herself and others to persist with more comprehensive and radical policies. Thus, in this journal in 1975 she published an article, 'The Last Days of Capitalism?'. It was a condensed version of ideas worked out long before. 'I was myself grown up and married about a month before there was a single communist state in the world; yet I have lived to see not far short of one-third of the world's population relying for its daily bread on a fully socialised economy.' The economies of countries such as Russia, China, Hungary and Yugoslavia had 'kept at bay with relative success the twin giants – inflation and unemployment – whose onslaughts capitalism now seems powerless to defeat'. Britain could yet learn a lot from the way these economies were managed and could afford to dispense with the false assumptions on which its own economy had been based:

> That large populations should have depended for the vital necessities of life, as well as for its luxurious trimmings, on the chance that someone somewhere would, of his own initiative, organise the production of these, and succeed in selling them at a price profitable to himself – this did indeed demand an almost miraculous act of faith . . . One should be astonished, not that [capitalism] is breaking down, but that it should have lasted so long.

She detected the collapse of the mixed economy because in the mid-1970s neither workers nor businessmen were making those minimum contributions necessary to make capitalism work.

She rejected revolutionary violence as the inevitable outcome and economic collectivism as necessarily implying political dictatorship but saw some chance both of our recognising that the economic system was 'visibly falling to pieces under our feet' and of applying lessons learned elsewhere without following some countries down the road of revolutionary carnage.

What was required, she believed, was a different way of establishing socialism. This could be achieved through a democratically instituted form of incomes policy – the "keystone of the socialist arch'. Barbara Wootton has argued for such a policy over a period of 40 years in very general and also highly specific terms. The basis of her argument, from a broad approach utilising concepts and theories from social sciences other than economics as well as those hitherto regarded as falling within the scope of that discipline, was laid in her beautifully named *Lament for Economics* (1938). Intended as a counterblast to Lionel Robbins's *The Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, this book criticised many contemporary economists for wrapping themselves up in abstractions as though the economic problems of the world either did not exist or at least were no concern of theirs. Much theoretical economics was not as socially neutral as it pretended to be. 'In what purported to be purely objective accounts of the working of a free enterprise economy, one could too often detect the hand of the apologist.' Much of the book has an uncanny relevance to the controversy which has raged in recent years within the economics profession between classical or neo-classical economists and radical economists. Barbara Wootton was criticised in the *Economic Journal* and elsewhere by professional colleagues who disputed their neglect of practical affairs and their preoccupation with the abstractions of value theory. In particular they found it hard to accept her strictures on narrow specialisation and the need for research into the social, political and psychological aspects of economic conditions – which she felt was required to explain such conditions.

After the war she developed the attack on neo-classical wage theory and wrote *The Social Foundations of Wage Policy, A study of Contemporary British Wage and Salary Structure* (1955). The earnings structure was an 'accumulated deposit laid down by a rich mixture of social and economic forces operating through considerable periods of history'. Increasingly, during the century collective bargaining, statutory regulations and arbitration awards had taken over much of the business of wage determination. The structure of earnings was highly anomalous and unequal and the spread from top to bottom far exceeded the range of differences which could credibly be ascribed to variations in either inborn or acquired aptitudes. Nor was it possible to discover any sign of an inverse relationship between the monetary and non-monetary attractions of different jobs. She rejected all interpretations which implied some reinforcement of market policies. Her alternative analysis implied

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the adoption of a policy which distinguished what increase in earnings could be afforded nationally, given inflationary pressures, from how that increase was to be distributed. Wage determinations would be conditioned by a programme of tapered increases with proportionately the most going to the low paid, subject to modifications such as those required to meet labour shortages in certain industries. The long-term objectives of greater equality would have to be clearly defined and argued for, and wage policy was but one item in a comprehensive social programme. The pattern of income distribution was 'essentially a political question'.

Despite its invocation during all the debates about incomes policy since the early 1960s the Labour movement continues to equivocate about its chief conclusion. In objecting to incomes policy as such instead of to an incomes policy which is primarily restricted to wages and takes insufficient heed of profits, dividends, fringe benefits, salaries, self-employment incomes, fiscal policy and the social wage, many unions are in danger of jettisoning any hope of establishing economic collectivism by agreement. As Barbara Wootton herself put it recently: 'In the conditions of today, government control of the distribution of income is a necessary condition of *any* kind of viable economic system: and socialist resistance to this proposition is peculiarly illogical and inept . . . The divine right of free collective bargaining resolves itself into a devilish game of beggar-my-neighbour.'

Pithy Account

In 1974 she returned to the fray with a new book, *Incomes Policy: An Inquest and a Proposal*. This not only included the pithiest and most literate account of incomes policy as practised in this country since the early 1960s but also the outlines of a proposed incomes gains tax, whereby 100 per cent was to be levied in tax on any increase above a prescribed maximum percentage in any financial year. In this book she presented the choices with clarity:

> It is just not true that what people are paid concerns only those who make the payment and those who receive it. In the case of wages and salaries, rises do not necessarily come out of the pocket of the recipient's employers: collective bargains are repeatedly paid for by consumers and/or taxpayers for whom no seat is reserved at the bargaining table. What is more, the whole community has a direct concern in the overall distribution of income, inasmuch as this shapes the social, as well as the economic, pattern of the society in which we live.

This contribution to policy discussion in present-day Britain could have been made only by a mind strongly grounded in the social sciences and with a creative understanding of how those sciences might develop. Her ability to *see* the social and political as well as economic determinants of wages and to take a more detached view of professional economics may have arisen not merely from the catholicity of her practical interests but from her pre-occupation with planning. As she said in 1974, 'the focus of my interest has shifted from the economic to the social.' The interest in planning revealed by her book, *Plan or No Plan* and later by *Lament for Economics* was also an interest in methodology – a desire to show how the truth could be established and, moreover, to treat with suspicion current intellectual fashions, including the sentiments of even her closest associates if they did not seem to her to accord with the facts.

Social Scientist

This steely independence of mind is rarer than generally supposed and she felt impelled to justify her intellectual position. The chance came from lectures given to students at Bedford College. She noted that her life had virtually spanned the history of the modern social sciences and whatever the imprecisions and the idiocies of some schools of thought there were some rich auguries for the future.

In *Testament for Social Science* (1950) she expressed her belief in scientific method. For her the differences between the material of the social and the natural sciences were differences of degree, rather than of kind. She was concerned about accurate observation of data, exact formulation of hypotheses and the whole process of empirical verification. In the growing prestige of empirical economic science, anthropology and psychology she placed hopes of social science achieving greater unity and authority. She also foresaw a time when man would be able to exert more intelligent control over the problems which led to so much misery and the loss of so many lives.

The historical optimism displayed in this work did not prevent her from recognising the striking contrast between man's growing mastery over matter and his still pitiful incompetence in dealing with personal and social relationships. Such incompetence had to be exposed and explained before new skills could be developed. She decided to devote five years of her life to the task of tracing and evaluating the real achievements of large areas of the social sciences.

In 1959 her most substantial work, *Social Science and Social Pathology*, was published. In this she assessed a wide range of theories and research on crimes, maternal separation or deprivation, mental disorder and mental illness, and showed what little evidence there was for many popular theories about the criminal personality, the low intelligence of delinquents, the delinquency of latch-key children, the disastrous consequences of illegitimacy, and the transmission of social failure from generation to generation. The book is predominantly, and rightly, critical.

For anyone beginning in the social sciences it is a searing, and in parts highly entertaining, review of all that is outrageous and avoidable. Her blistering observations on social work have attracted notoriety and have helped a lot of social workers to obtain a fuller understanding of their work and demand better theoretical prescriptions from their mentors:

> Happily it can be presumed that the lamentable arrogance of the language in which social workers describe their activities is not generally matched by the work that they actually do: otherwise it is hardly credible that they would not constantly get their faces slapped . . . without doubt the majority of those who engage in social work are sensible, practical people, who conduct their business on a reasonably matter-of-fact basis. The pity is that they have to write such nonsense about it: and to present themselves to the world as so deeply tainted with what Virginia Woolf has called 'the peculiar repulsiveness of those who dabble their fingers self-approvingly in the stuff of others' souls'.

In that chapter, as in a subsequent paper succinctly entitled *Daddy knows Best*, she put forward a reasoned case for material help for families to overcome their problems rather than elaborate advice about marital, child-rearing and household management problems.

Ambiguities

She had a tendency in this *tour de force* to take the non-deviant too much for granted, or leave the complex web of 'normal' social structure unexamined (for example, the effects of maternal deprivation need to be related to different modern forms of the family). She also had a tendency to miss conflicts of meaning invested by different social groups, including professional research workers, in concepts like delinquency, deprivation, poverty and intelligence. The ambiguities which result are more difficult to resolve scientifically, either by means of operational measurement, or the construction of casual models, than Barbara Wootton at that time seemed to allow. But though sometimes extreme and sometimes severe, her analysis provided the kind of wide-ranging critique of progress in empirical research and the construction of theory which the social sciences badly needed. It was far from being a negative work. On the contrary, it was suffused with a vision of the potentiality of the social sciences. She wrote in her autobiography:

> Just as mechanical inventions have revolutionised technology, vastly increased man's control over his physical environment and extended his expectation of life, so we may expect these newer tools to create a no less dramatic extension of his control over his social environment . . . In the social services lies perhaps the greatest hope that in time this also – the most magnificent conquest of all – may yet be achieved.

Her concern with democratic socialism, the social sciences and social policy is matched by her attempts to apply them in personal practice. Her contribution to the administration of the law, as a magistrate, spanned 44 years and her contribution to its reform was made not only in such writings as *Social Science and Social Pathology* and *Crime and the Criminal Law* (1963). As one of the first group of women peers, she introduced into the House of Lords the Bill abolishing capital punishment. She has served on four Royal Commissions and many Government committees and was chairman of the Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence, which took an enlightened view of cannabis, wholly justified by subsequent events.

Throughout life, Barbara Wootton has discounted the conventional wisdom and has spoken her mind. As a consequence, she has been isolated at times from theorists and practioners alike. Fortunately, she has lived long enough to find her major ideas universally accepted and her example increasingly followed.

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Household Faces-3 Esther Rantzen

Celebrity Square

Those top front teeth have captured a quite inordinate amount of attention. People go on and on about them as if they were the most interesting facet of Esther's person. One result of this has been the lack of any intelligent discussion of her bottom front teeth, which are in fact just as noteworthy. *They* bend inwards in a bumpy arc, forming in repose (one imagines) an oval pocket of air among all that crowded dentition. Whereas the upper teeth are just big healthy teeth (if somewhat over-exposed), the lower ones retreat a little plaintively from the lips and, when their owner is on-screen, languish in permanent shadow. Keep an eye out for them next Saturday. 'Everyone goes on about my teeth the whole time,' says Esther. 'I go on about my teeth the whole time too.'

So whose triviality are we conniving at here – that of the public by whom she is very largely treasured, that of the medium she so conspicuously adorns, or that of Esther herself? Certainly the chunky clippings file on Rantzen, E., gives you no promptings in any direction (except to shred your NUJ card with a brief moan of shame). They all start with the teeth, naturally. They all say the same pre-packaged, televisual things about her. And they all end (you can sense the hack's fingers hovering in triumph over the keys) with 'That's life', or 'That's life!', or, more enigmatically, 'That's life . . .'. And it hardly ever is, since no impression of personality is allowed to emerge from the ruck of telly tattle. Well, that's television, you might say – the great trivialiser. But it might even turn out that, apart from fronting a show watched by 13 million people, apart from being quite rich, very successful and uncontrollably famous (you can write just *Esther* on an envelope these days, and it will get to Esther), apart from being loved in most British homes and salaamed everywhere in the streets (shop-girls line up and cheer, restaurateurs fall over in incredulous gratitude), Esther is not otherwise remarkable. The appeal of her show depends on Mr Average regarding her as round about his equal. Perhaps, in some ways, it's a shrewd assessment.

Nothing happened to her before television did. She is not forthcoming – or interesting to talk to – about her early years, save for the odd likeable tribute to their utter cloudlessness. The daughter of a senior BBC engineer, she attended the North London Collegiate School and went on to Somerville College, Oxford, where she took a Second in English (the clippings are enjoyably erratic on this point). Nothing much happened to her there either, apart from some work with the Experimental Theatre Club and an outing for Esther at the Edinburgh Festival. She then fell under the benign sway of the Beeb. Via the sound-effects departments on radio, via research for Ned Sherrin, via a foothold in Current Affairs, Esther arrived on the *Braden's Week* team in 1969.

The clippings start here: so does Esther's mild notoriety, the succession of 'stories' about her behaviour which are still related by those she has to some extent alienated or eclipsed. One hesitates to pass this stuff on; fame attracts and magnifies everything, including stray disgruntlements that might otherwise have been forgotten. But these stories are part of her Beeb myth by now. They say she can't work with other girls, especially pretty ones. They say her career was inspired by her well-known alliance with a Beeb high-up. They say she is a camera-hog, impossibly officious, incapable of delegating (they say she would answer every letter and every telephone-call personally if she could – her workoholicism is indeed well vouched for). They say she is on the showy side, flash, status-conscious (they say she used to linger by the Beeb car park in her agent's limo, while the scowling menials climbed into their heaps).

Other people, a lot of men, naturally, say things too, among them that she is warm, unspoilt, generous, so unshowy that she still drives her old mini (and also retains her original charlady. Who blames her? They're *very* hard to get), manically thorough, solicitous to a fault, endearingly insecure about her celebrity (ever-haunted, apparently, by the example of Simon Dee's abrupt humiliation), noble, wise, honest and true, and generally tremendous fun. She surrounds herself with a small circle of close friends and hopes thereby to preserve her sense of proportion. She sees her parents often. She probably likes animals and animals probably like her. Who can tell?

Most people think they can. The press has persistently swung from crude adulation to crude dislike and back again, as if waiting for the right moment to disown her. As early as 1971, when she was between *Braden's Week* and involved in an unhappy venture called *She and She*, Esther was attacked with guileless ferocity in the *Spectator*, by Mr Tony Palmer. Writing, as usual, like a man who has just come down

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with rabies, Mr Palmer called the new show 'obscene' and went elegantly on about Esther's 'mind-boggling banalities' and 'affrontery [*sic*]', picturing her, in *Braden* days, 'crawling around the floor like a prostrate ape'.

Esther was better protected thereafter. Despite a trickle of 'Not Good Enough, Esther' pieces and 'Come Off It, Esther' pieces (her brand of jokey ombudswomanship must have seemed quite new then), Esther was too obviously here-to-stay once *That's Life* was launched in the spring of 1973. The *Sunday Mirror* learned its lesson, in piquant style, when it took her to task for badmouthing a get-slim-quick technique which the paper had somehow endorsed. Under what might well be the longest *SM* editorial ever written (complete with an unkind photograph of Esther in mid-whistle on that show of hers, and a headline as big as the one about Khruschev's manners) a selection of readers' letters on the subject was impetuously reproduced: 'People like her are few and far between'; 'Please try and say something nice about Esther'; 'Last Sunday she more than stood up for herself, and cut your criticisms of her into small shreds!' Oh dear. The editor should have tucked the item away beneath the slimming ads.

They love her, you see – and without any of the humility or sense of distance with which they love remoter stars. When she walks in the streets it's 'Esther' this and 'Esther' that, and 'There's my girl, Esther' and 'Keep it up, Esther, you're doing a great job!' Is she? *That's Life* attracts a steady 12-14 million viewers a week, and it is now to occupy the coveted 9.30 spot on Saturday night. The programme's investigative shop-talk, which claims the heavier half of its 40 minutes, is plainly well-insulated by Esther's sleepless, monomaniac assiduity: only on *Braden's Week* has she ever been implicated in a successful lawsuit (when the team were adjudged to have held someone's breasts up to ridicule). And the remaining mixture of sunny comment, dated variety turns and genial smut – designed, as it all must be, for maximum vulgarity throughout – makes painless enough viewing for the torpid and the housebound. Insomuch as the phenomenon of Esther Rantzen raises any general points, it raises that old opposition: the one between populism and elitism, between giving them what they want and showing them what they might learn to like.

To watch *That's Life* is, however, to die a little. Nothing is so silly that it can't get on it: a crocodile that barks, someone playing *The Happy Wanderer* on a roll of lavatory paper, a cat playing ping-pong, a lady who eats wood – these are famous past items. Nowadays Esther sits on a dais flanked, above her, by her velvet-suited musketeers; in front, ensconsed in his posh nook, Cyril Fletcher sprawls on a club armchair. In a typical show they will do a long item on say, the 'wilt' factor (i.e. heat-resistance) of BR plastic spoons; 'instant droop' gets a laugh here, as does 'severe shrinkage', as does 'extremely kinky'. The team then belabours Sun Energy Systems for its inadequacies (Esther might as well be Shaw Taylor for much of this). Fruity Cyril Fletcher recites an unfortunate small-ad. – 'large chest for sale, deep drawers' – to vast acclaim from the audience. The team takes to the streets, asking all and sundry to recite any lines of verse they might happen to know (lots of 'I wandered lonely as a cleowd . . . oh dear, I never could remember poetry'), and we all have a laugh. The team returns to the studios to listen to The Fivepenny Piece singing a song. The team moves on to list the most recent atrocities of the Gas Board . . . If you've met her you can see the edge of nerves behind her squints and winces, the way she throws her head back in explosive false laughter, the way that top lip slides ever-upwards. But it is an expertly demotic performance, a *tour de force* of shrugging folly. It's easy enough to see why people don't mind her being in their sitting rooms.

Some kinds of careerist are improved by success. The things they want are simple things; they might want them very much, yet the things they want remain simple. It takes a bit of an effort to disapprove of Esther; she is no more frivolous than most television is; she is not worrying. Over the next few years she will probably get nicer. She will certainly get more famous. And while it would be unfair to say that she'll be well-known merely for being well-known, it will remain true that her celebrity is the most interesting thing about her.

Anne Bennett

No Fixed Abode

'I must have come quite often or you wouldn't miss me when I wasn't there,' I said to a senior consultant who queried my absences from his seminar in inter-family dynamics – I was dealing with this man who said he had a job but no money till next week, so would I give him some as the DHSS wouldn't?

'No,' I said. 'What's the bloody point of you people?' he said. 'What a system. What am I supposed to do, then?'

I told him that Lord Beveridge, who planned the whole thing, had never envisaged people as penniless as himself – and anyhow how had he managed last night?

'A friend put me up.'

'Well that's how it is,' I said. 'One has to rely on one's friends.' And he went off muttering to himself. He had a certain sort of Bogart-like charm. 'He'll survive,' I thought, which is more than I could say of the tramp who followed him in, asking for a letter for clothes from the WRVS, a worthy body whose attitude to distributing their stock sometimes seems akin to banks and loans. The more urgent the need the more likely the refusal. Adam and Eve would be lucky to get a blanket and King Solomon would have got an outfit.

It was lunch-time and I nipped to the bookies, a run of failed Wogan's Winners having led me to move upmarket to Jeffrey Bernard's hopefuls.

Back to duty. 'It's like this,' said this young man accompanied by his mother. 'We're homeless. If I could get there I know I'd get a job and somewhere to stay. The DHSS won't give us the money unless we can give an address. Could you help verify the address?'

I liked the look of them. 'Where is it then,' I said, 'the address to verify?'

'I know I'd get a job,' he said, 'and a place to stay would go with it.'

'And this is where?'

'Northumberland. I worked for the Earl.'

'When was this?' I said.

'I suppose it was seven years ago, wasn't it Mum?' 'More like eight' said his Mum. She didn't look very certain. I felt doubtful too.

'Let's be realistic,' I said. 'You want me to phone an Earl who you worked for some seven years ago and you think he'll remember you.' Aristocrats aren't noted for their concern for the peasantry.

A feeling of despondency spread over the three of us. 'Relatives, what about relatives?' She brightened. 'There's my sister.' I brightened. 'You've got her address?'

'I'm not quite sure, now what was it Dave? 8 Wells Road, or was it 18?'

'Eighteen,' said Dave. 'At least I think so.' 'How long ago' I said, 'since you were in touch?' 'I suppose it's 12 years,' she said hesitantly. 'When I think about it I don't suppose she'd welcome us up there. She didn't approve of me really. She's been married and settled down for years as a matter of fact.'

I still liked both of them. She looked a bit battered for her 55 years, but she was still handsome, had a style about her. She'd probably been the flighty one when she was young, rebelling, going out with the wrong young men. I expect her young nieces look at old photo albums and say 'Who's that, Mum? She's pretty.' 'That's your Auntie Jean,' they say. 'Yes, she left home when she was young. Wonder where she is now,' and the nieces would look down at the photo and think that Auntie Jean doubtless led a more exciting life than their mother.

I started phoning round. Sheer luck. I found this woman who wanted someone to share her house for company. It might work for a while, it was worth a try, she would have the son as well.

'It's an address,' I said. 'You can draw your money. Dave could hitch up North, see if there is anything going.' We all beamed on each other. On the way out they passed Lorraine. She'd been in and out of care from the age of six; she was 15 now. 'Hello Lorraine,' I said, 'I thought you were in a foster home.'

I could have shown her the woman who'd just gone out. 'Stop running,' I might have said, 'or you'll end up like her, old age coming and nowhere to go.' It wouldn't have done any good.

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London Diary

☐ We were standing, in February 1974, on the campus of the University of Jerusalem, where enraged students were demanding Moshe Dayan's resignation as Minister of Defence because of his costly errors during the Yom Kippur war. 'The whole trouble with this country,' someone remarked, 'is that nobody resigns, no matter what he's done.' So Yitzhak Rabin's resignation, in reparation for an offence which no one pretends to be terribly shocked about, is a healthy precedent. It puts him in the same category as Willy Brandt, who immediately resigned when a member of his staff turned out to be an East German agent. In the contrasting category you have Mrs Gandhi, who declared a state of emergency rather than resign – which under the law was obligatory – on being found guilty of electoral irregularities. And the most famous clinger to power was, of course, Nixon. Oddly, it was Rabin, when ambassador in Washington, who surprised American Jews by urging them to forsake their traditional Democratic allegiance and vote for Nixon. Little did he expect to meet his own miniature Watergate. What offences would necessitate the resignation of a British minister? Drunken driving? Pot? Sex with a schoolgirl? I wonder.

☐ At this time of the year the tourist season arrives with a multilingual roar. I am in two minds about it; I enjoy the feeling of being in a cosmopolitan city, but it does become very difficult to get about if you have work to do. As underground railways elsewhere have flat fares, visitors to London are slow to learn that you pay by distance on the tube. Often they buy 20p tickets (this must appear to them a reasonable sum), travel from Earls Court to Camden Town, and meet the demand for excess payment with a recourse to negotiation, of the sort that they would doubtless engage in with an income-tax inspector. It seems, too, that Londoners are the only people in the world who walk up escalators; foreigners find the 'Stand on the right' rule incomprehensible. The other day I witnessed an odd scene in the tube. The compartment was filled with young Dutch people and at Goodge Street a flaxen-haired girl, aged about 18, jumped up to offer her seat to a bald-headed, briefcase-carrying Briton. Charming of her, really; he had a day's work ahead of him and looked ground down by his years on the Northern Line. But as the rest of the Dutch applauded, laughed, and uttered below-sea-level comments, he did look acutely embarrassed.

☐ I am fascinated to learn, from a book based on recently declassified American documents, that Soviet scientists were well on the way to making an atomic bomb before 1941 but were ordered to stop work by Stalin, who ruled that it had 'no military potential'. Stalin, as we know, also ignored all warnings of the German attack that was to devastate his country, and on the vital day refused to believe that it was happening. Later, he warned Mao Tse-tung against the foolhardy project of attempting to gain power. He had already been wrong about China long before, in 1927, when he didn't expect Chiang Kai-shek to disrupt the Kuomintang-Communist alliance. I hope to begin work shortly on my monumental study, *Stalin the Chump*, but am awaiting offers from Soviet publishers.

☐ Two weeks ago I wrote about Lord Glenamara (better known as Ted Short) and his objections to a certain passage in Eddie Milne's book, *No Shining Armour*, in which Mrs Short was mentioned. After an exhausting day spent in conversation with lawyers, I realise that I received – and gave – a false impression. It's true that Short still has a libel action pending, to recover damages for injury suffered while the original edition of the book was on sale. It's not true that he is still trying to hold up publication. The publishers having made the requested cut, agreement has been reached about the form which future editions should take. I hope that is all right now.

☐ Advertisements specifying the sex of job applicants aren't illegal, of course, when the employer isn't British. I have been trying to follow the logic of the University of Riyad, Saudi Arabia. It is asking for two lecturers in poetry, one male and one female; two lecturers in drama, one male and one female; and one lecturer in the modern novel, who must be female. Is this because, since most of the best modern novelists (British, at least) are women, it's necessary to have a woman to lecture about them? Or is Riyad building up to having a 51 per cent female staff, in accordance with world population? Or is it, as they say in the US, positive discrimination? Either way, you can't accuse the campus of being a male preserve – though whether I'd advise a woman friend to live in Saudi Arabia is another matter. I note, finally, that there's equal pay.

☐ I'm not sure what H. Montgomery Hyde thought he was saying when, at the Foyle's lunch in honour of Christopher Isherwood, he attacked Rebecca West's review of *Christopher and His Kind* and brought up the Dame's famous affair with H. G. Wells. Is it Hyde's view that anyone who has lived in sin (as they used to say) is forever debarred from making moral judgments? As a writer – and they're supposed to be talking about literature at these lunches – Dame Rebecca certainly gained from her Wells years. I have been reading *The Thinking Reed*, her novel about rich people, whom she presumably met while making the social rounds with the wealthy H.G. Stylistically, it reveals the recent influence of Proust; but, while Proust analysed French snobbery, *The Thinking Reed* is more cosmopolitan and surveys the French, the British and the American upper classes of the period. The social observation is razor-sharp, the wit delectable. It's hard to recall many novels written between 1919 and 1939 which stand up so well. A reprint would be welcome, I'd say. The book must be hard to find; I bought my copy at Hay-on-Wye. I don't regret paying £1.50, but notice that an earlier pencil-scrawl on the flyleaf reads '1/6d'.

☐ A friend of mine, living in the country during the blitz of 1940, was driving into town and taking a short cut through a quiet street when he was hailed by a customer (my friend is a bookseller) who lived there. 'Look at that hole in my roof!' the man shouted. 'I'm fed up, I'm clearing out of London. D'you want to buy my house? Five hundred quid for a quick sale.' My friend laughed and declined. He now avoids going through the street, which is The Bishop's Avenue, otherwise known as Millionaires' Row. Another man who got fed up and cleared out of London was Mr Ravi Tikkoo, but he got his £3m. for Kenstead Hall. Granted, there was no hole in the roof. Incidentally, does Prince Faisal, the new resident, know that it's next door to the most distinguished home for Jewish old people?

☐ Last, a few words about Colonel Phalanger, who was called in by the Secret Service to deal with the master-criminal, Tragopan. On the road from Potoroo to Douroucouli, the Colonel was ambushed by a pair of desperadoes, Meerkat and Ruff; but he was rescued by his devoted valet, Serval. His adventures completed, he went into business and became a director of Conure. He married a Miss Margay, of an old Dunlin family. They have five lovely daughters – Mara, Rosella, Quelea, Agamid and Casiragua. The eldest is a fine pianist, a pupil of Scheltopusik. The Phalanger household is completed by the Colonel's sister, who never married; she got the nickname of Pudu and, frankly, the girls consider her rather a jird. At this point I'd better come clean and sign off. All these names are those of animals, taken from the London Zoo's 1976 list of acquisitions.

Mervyn Jones

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ One of Mrs Thatcher's shadow cabinet, Sir Keith Joseph, told the conference that socialism had become an instrument for poverty and unemployment. 'I am appalled by the number of people I see looking through litter bins for a crust of bread or a bit of sandwich,' he said. – *Daily Mail* (A. Lloyd)

☐ A report in yesterday's *News* of the Cambridge wedding between Mr Lionel Keith McMurray and Miss Karen Sandra Stubbings incorrectly stated that the bride's dress was made by her mother. The dress was made by the bridegroom's mother. – *Cambridge Evening News* (John Heywood)

☐ The Tory MP for Liverpool, Wavertree, Anthony Steen, who slept through last month's Commons confidence vote after a tiring jet flight, said yesterday: 'It is a very sick society we are living in when your gnomes are not safe.' – *Daily Mail* (Margaret Craddock)

☐ Lord Trenchard, son of the late Commissioner, has made his first speech in the House of Lords after 21 years' membership. His theme was Industrial Democracy. He didn't much care for the idea. – *Police* (E. G. Breeze)

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Yvonne Roberts

The Snooker Player

Patsy Fagin has three homes. The first is a comfortable house complete with china shire horses, fake wood fires and a smart leatherette three-piece in the East End of London. The second is Clapham Bus Garage. The third is above a furniture store in the middle of Neasden shopping precinct. The first has a bed and no snooker table, the other two have snooker tables and no beds. Patsy divides his time about equally. He takes his livelihood seriously.

Clapham Bus Garage has two snooker tables. The tables aren't bad, Patsy says, but the main advantage is that it's just around the corner. Neasden, an hour and a half bus-ride away, is an altogether classier proposition; as befits the game conceived in India, the bosom of the Empire. Here, behind locked doors (membership fee: £3 annually; hire of table, 96p an hour), is not so much a billiard hall, more a snooker centre. It has eight tables, hessian-covered walls, a café cum public bar equipped with cheese rolls, tomato sauce, packs of half-dozen eggs and beer on tap. And some of the best amateurs in the business. Some players, like Patsy, will spend eight hours a day practising. Others are there to watch and bet. Everything is legal, insists the owner Ron Gross, three times England Amateur Champion: the old days have passed. Positively no undesirables are allowed on *his* premises. It's enough to make a hustler weep. But for all the change of image, the ghost of Damon Runyon stalks.

When Patsy Fagin arrives it could be ten in the morning or midnight, mid-week or Sunday. The semi-gloom and the ceaseless crack of ball upon ball make time seem irrelevant. Professionals and amateurs alike come from all over the South-East for the pleasure of finding a competitive game. Ron Cross is the bestower of handicaps. In the course of the game conversation is muted. Any deals which are done, are done discreetly. 'Tish', a little man, Brylcreemed and dressed in black and white like a character from *Guys and Dolls*, and his mate 'Wings' – 'because he flies in and out all day' – supervise the tea-urn and takes the money for the tables. The only noise is the collective intake of breath on a tricky shot. It's an atmosphere Patsy Fagin has known since the age of 12 – and here he is The Hero. 'Put it this way,' says a fan, 'It's not just a game for him. It's a way of life. And he's the best.'

Patsy Fagin, one of a family of ten, began playing snooker, he says, because his attention at the Christian Brothers School in Dublin began to wander – and the billiard hall happened to be near. At 14 he continued to play when he got his first job in a grocery store. That job ended when the fellow on the wine-counter grassed on him and told the manager where Patsy could be found on a Saturday afternoon. It was, of course, at the snooker table. At 15, Patsy dived over a wall, sprained one wrist and broke the other. He took the plasters off the next day, played in the Irish boy championships, won and left for London for some 'real' competition. He stuck it out for ten days and went home to his mother. A few months later he came back for a second try and this time he stayed. 'I hated it,' he says, 'but I stayed for the snooker.'

At 16, with no job, friends or family in London, Patsy Fagin found digs and attracted a backer. The backer owned a few jewellery stalls in Oxford Street. He provided the cash, Patsy had the skill, and for two years the couple played the billiard halls of the city from Wandsworth to Kilburn and back down again. 'I looked young so people would bet big money. It was nothing for us to split three or four hundred pounds a night between us. But we could only stay a few days in one hall before they got wise. I won,' he says honestly, 'because I *was* the best. Then and now, if I concentrate for a half an hour or so beforehand, if I feel OK and I'm relaxed, there's no real risk involved.'

The money came – but it also went. Hangers-on had to be entertained, Patsy liked a bet on the dogs. But he also liked the game itself, so he entered amateur competitions and began to collect titles and that led to jealousy. Mishaps occasionally occurred. A ball might fly over his shoulder and land on the table in the middle of a difficult game; a gambler might offer him cash in hand to 'lose'. Worst of all, someone once broke his cue in two. He had used it for five years, he says, and now it would be like losing the use of his hands. Then he was young enough to recover and he was lucky too. 'The owner of the billiard hall asked me why I hadn't played for a few weeks. When I told him, he gave me a pile of old cues. The one I wanted stood out immediately. It was hand-made. I've used it ever since.'

Patsy Fagin is 26 now. Thin, tall and dark, the type that mothers like. If Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins is the George Best of Snooker, Patsy is the Billy Wright; friendly rather than flamboyant. Three years ago, he says, he injected a little order into his life. He applied to the World Professional Snooker Association to become a professional. He did it partly because he had run out of challengers and partly because he wanted to get close to the really big money. His application was turned down. ('They don't have to give a reason. It could be because you turn up in jeans at tournaments as an amateur!') Snooker may be the sport of the working class, but it still wears the uniform of the gentry; dinner jackets and bow ties.

Last year, Patsy Fagin was finally accepted into the elite. Now he appears in exhibition matches, tournaments and championship. He is still regarded, he says, as the new man. He is brought in as supporting cast for the well-established players and paid £60 plus expenses for an evening's work – a game, and a half an hour or so of socialising afterwards. If he could win the World Championship this month, he says, he would be able to double or treble his nightly fee and get into the £40,000 a year bracket. If he loses, he should still earn about £10,000 with bookings stretching ahead for the next six months; Grimsby, Hull, Sheffield and Dublin. He knows the matches he will win, those he will lose. Some matches, he says, have as much to do with cabaret as they do with snooker. In May there is a snooker week at Warner's holiday camp when Patsy Fagin is expected to mix with the guests in the evening and play for three of the seven days; *Pot Black* in the flesh.

'Some players,' he says, 'come on with the patter while they play. But I just give them the best snooker I can. If I wanted to tell jokes, I'd have been a comedian.' Patsy will get £220 for the week and a £500 bonus if he wins. But nowadays the money doesn't go on gambling; the hangers-on have melted away.

At 21 and in digs, Patsy Fagin took a fancy to the girl next door. 'I asked her to come out with me once I'd lost the All England Championship. I lost and she did.' Two years ago, the couple got engaged and Patsy moved in with her mum and her dad; a case of losing a landlady and gaining a supporters' club. Derek, the dad, a driver with an asphalt firm, acts as chaffeur on long-distance bookings; June, the mum and captain of the local ladies' darts team, shows the most concern for Patsy's well-being. ('I never bother about my hands or anything like that . . .', he says.) This year, the family should have had a fortnight caravanning in Wales in August but snooker has intervened. Next year, Patsy Fagin intends to get married when he has 'a few bob put by' for a house. 'I reckon I've got another 15 years or so at this. Why do I like it?' And there is no need to pause for thought: 'I know it's the only thing I do well.'

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

If Only

Strange indeed are the odd chances and the twists and turns of history. Our unpredictable lives hang upon threads tipsily woven by those frightful Fates but we do not by any means always realise when they have done us a favour. 'If only,' people wailed in 1940, 'our army had been better prepared!' I don't agree at all. I think it is a miracle that we were so woefully unready for the fray. Supposing, say, we had had a few more and better equipped armoured divisions in Europe and the French had put up a rather more stout-hearted performance. Supposing, retreating slowly westwards across northern France in the face of much larger German forces, we had suffered a series of shattering defeats with enormous losses both on the ground and in the air, with our fighter force fully committed. By about mid-November we would have found ourselves in Brittany in a final pocket of resistance and about to be pushed into the sea off Brest. The British people are slow to accept uncomfortable thoughts but in 1940 the majority could remember the first world war (only 22 years away) and, after six months of appalling reverses, even the blindest might have come gradually to get accustomed to the idea that the game was up. It was the suddenness of Dunkirk and then our splendid, if perilous, isolation that saved us. There was no time to think. Our fortitude was partly thrust upon us.

How fascinating can be history's numerous 'if onlys'. If only, for example, Hitler had been born a woman, 20 million people would not have died. I see him as a lovely, dark-eyed Adolfine Baumgarten, married to a prosperous sausage manufacturer in Darmstadt, mother of three cuddlesome kiddies and an excellent cook, with an especially light hand with the *Kartoffelpuffer* (potato pancakes, if you didn't happen to know). Then, if only Louis XVI during his attempted escape and flight to Varennes hadn't lost his poor old head, so soon to be lost in actuality, and recklessly stuck it out of the coach window to see what was happening (*'Où sommes-nous?'*). And if only Lady Macbeth, almost certainly a victim in her youth of a daring educational and socialistic experiment by her blue-blooded but left-wing parents, had been sent as a girl to the Edinburgh Roedean rather than to the unprincipled jungle of the Glamis Comprehensive, dear old King Duncan might be, so to speak, with us still.

At the present moment in our complicated history, when England seems to offer so little to be proud of and life is quite fairly bleak, it is tempting to wish oneself elsewhere. If only, in fact, one had been born an American and about a century ago. I doubt if, in America, it has ever been possible, as it still is, just, in this country, to be newly poor with some sort of dignity, so let us imagine that we are a rich American and, what is more, an American woman, the females, born of forceful pioneering stock and accustomed to picking off Indians and other vermin, having always seen to it that they have an infinitely better time over there than their counterparts do over here. 'Never underestimate the power of a woman', the *Ladies' Home Journal* was the first to say in a forthright editorial some 90 years ago and in *The Journal of the Century*, a rich plum pudding of excerpts from that widely popular American magazine (Secker & Warburg bring it to us, fully illustrated, at £8.50), we can see what the ladies got up to.

Apart from the hideous houses which they chose to build and live in, it can't have been totally unjolly to be a Vanderbilt, and here is a carefully posed photograph of Mrs William K., ready for the evening and dressed to kill in an audacious ball-gown and surrounded in fact by dead birds, in this case doves hung on wires and obligingly simulating flight around her. Not, alas, a very pretty lady. She had hidden depths, I dare say. It is a strong face which later on is going to look like that grim woman (was it Jane Darwell?) up front in that overloaded lorry in *The Grapes of Wrath*. But there were certainly pretty women about, and here is a snap of the youthful and enchanting Ethel Barrymore, 'artistic in every fibre' it says, deep in a book whose title we cannot see (she claimed 'a tremendous feeling for Balzac' but later on came to rely rather on such valuable volumes as 'How to Mix a Really Strong Cocktail'). Then Charles Dana Gibson is to be seen at his easel in 1902, drawing the 'Gibson' girls on which every smart woman tried to model herself, Pavlova is caught by the camera, hot from Petrograd and on tippy-toe as a gauzy-winged dragonfly, and there are rather fanciful paintings of George Washington being turned down by a belle of New York called Mary Philipse ('his nose was impossible'), and successfully proposing to Martha Custis ('I had to wait until ye ladye was in ye proper mood').

Two of life's pitfalls that it was essential for women to avoid were poverty and immodesty, in that order, and early on we find a helpful article on how absurdly easy it is ('Keep a bank account') to make money, Commodore Vanderbilt being cited as an example to all of what can be done, progressing rapidly from 'a row-boat on New York bay' to the nice round sum of $90m. The Astors, too, were quick to see that, although fur-trapping was all very well in its way, it was slightly more comfortable to move into real estate, own large sections of Manhattan, and sit back. Then there were Rockefeller and Peabody, prime examples of the generous instincts that so many Americans have and which, such is human nature, are only grudgingly acknowledged by the rest of the world.

As to immodesty, straight-from-the-shoulder articles keep us right on our toes and after 'Twenty-six ways of serving eggs' we find 'Can the Church Take the Place of the Saloon?' (frankly, no) and 'Does Jazz put the Sin into Syncopation?'. Public bathing beaches come under the camera's relentless scrutiny and one is horrified to see gentlemen, in those swim-suits furnished with bulge-concealing skirts, throwing handfuls

Roger Woddis

Letter Home

I've done the lot in China,
Watched acrobats and games,
Met Hua Kuo-peng – or was it 'feng'?
They have the *oddest* names.

I've slogged around the communes,
I've sampled Peking Duck –
The merest bite, but found it quite
The most *revolting* muck.

I've talked with 'barefoot doctors',
(Good heavens, don't ask *me*!)
I've dined till two, though sea-slug stew
Was *not* my cup of tea.

Their view of life is narrow,
Their Wall is wide and steep,
The Gang of Four is *such* a bore
I nearly fell asleep.

According to the posters,
Mao's widow was a nag,
Not unrefined, but more a kind
Of diplomatic bag.

They marvelled at my ear-rings,
They clapped me loud and long,
And when I spoke of Moscow's yoke
They cheered and struck a gong.

But when at last I staggered
Exhausted off to bed,
I bet a quid that all they did
Was talk of bloody Ted!

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of sand at ladies, their legs in full view and smiles all round. Could depravity go further? A stern article, printed bang in the middle of the frolicking arms and legs, says 'How Much of This Do You Want Your Daughter to Share?' The writer briskly answers himself with a loud 'none of it!', adding that, let alone 'share', one's daughter shouldn't even be allowed to gaze at it. Not even, one asks, in order to know what nasty things to avoid in future? Certainly not. Eyes front. To restore calm and confidence in female bosoms palpitating at the horrors of the beach (and there's even a game of leap-frog going on), the helpful editor wisely prints an inspiring, family photograph, full page, of the widowed Victoria, backed by a sporanned and obese Prince of Wales, gazing in horror at a vast, balloon-cheeked child, stuffed skin-tight with milk and cream and who turns out to be the Grand Duchess Tatiana of Russia, seated on her mother's knee and with Dad, the image of the youthful George V, standing behind and wearing one of those elaborate Russian tunics that make him look as though he is about to call the military band to attention and start them off on 'Zampa'.

The plan is clear. We are being invited to compare the seaside licentiousness with the decorum and righteousness of these royal persons. All right, let's do that, even though it's a bit late in the day. On the one hand we see tired clerks and typists having a happy time and enjoying themselves in one of the few places available to them. On the other, an English queen, certainly dutiful and a 'card' but a monster of selfishness who made her husband's life hellish and who hated children. With her is her lecherous son who ate too much and created, God help us, the *entente cordiale*, together with their royal Russian relations who understood so little of the country they so cruelly ruled and cared less. Personally, I'm for the beach.

Ladies planning sea-trips will want to know what to do for the best. The moment you get on board, 'cover your hat closely with brown paper and hang it up on a nail', the sea air putting paid instantly to ostrich plumes. Stock up with smelling salts, arnica, quinine pellets and a diarrhoea mixture of proven reliability. In cases of sea-sickness, 'iced champagne is the only thing that the stomach will retain'. If you can't, foolish you, afford champagne, turn to the section on Commodore Vanderbilt and mend your silly ways.

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Letters to the Editor

Labour and Europe

Sir, Coming from Derbyshire, I of course recognise in Mr Ivor R. Johns (Letters 1 April) the most fanatical anti-Marketeer our county can boast. We are proud of him. There is a kind of grandeur about his obsession. But he should remember the referendum before he accuses me of forgetting it. Direct elections were an issue in it. Mr Johns should look up the leaflet from the 'No' lobby, upon which he campaigned, warning that 'the plan is to have a Common Market Parliament by 1978 or shortly thereafter.' At every meeting I went to in Derbyshire I dealt with that point, as did other pro-Europeans. I said then, what I say again to Mr Johns now, that I expect the expanding European Community to remain confederal, but that in that system too the British people, whichever way they voted at the referendum, will want a say through elected representatives sent there for the purpose, as well as through Westminster.

Reminding me of a conference vote is like reminding Mr Johns that he was walloped two-to-one in the referendum; it won't change our views. But I hope both the Conference and the NEC will change their minds about direct elections, otherwise we shall have the ludicrous sight of everyone taking part in them except us. Much socialist influence we would have in Europe – or deserve – after that!

PHILLIP WHITEHEAD

House of Commons

The Meaning of Mentmore

Sir, The unquestionable fact (which you so rightly stress in your leader of 8 April on 'the scandalous cliff-hanger over the fate of Mentmore') that the great country houses with their artistic and historic contents have become an immense public attraction is not – more's the pity – likely *per se* to cut much ice with the Treasury. At the very least, however, one would have hoped that that Department might by now have grasped the cardinal importance of tourism for the balance of payments. Yet the Treasury still appears only too ready to obstruct any attempt to bring about what might be described in economic terms as a relatively trifling long-term investment in what has become established as one of the country's most flourishing growth industries.

On the other hand, your complaint that the maxim for owners has become 'when it is no longer advantageous to keep, then sell' is far too much of a simplification. Sales such as this are precipitated by the urgent necessity to discharge capital tax obligations to the state, which – precisely for that reason – is not entitled to disclaim responsibility for consequences which might not be in the public interest from the cultural point of view. According, as indeed you imply, the state has a duty here. Hence the existence of statutory provisions to preserve the inheritance for the public enjoyment.

What has become disturbingly clear as a consequence of the Mentmore affair is that this defensive machinery can be rendered ineffective if the will on the side of the state to operate it to the full is lacking, and is seen to be lacking. To what extent the mechanism has seized up on this occasion because of misconceived political expediency or the desire to maintain and even extend bureaucratic control, or a combination of both (doubtless with an admixture of indifference, bad judgment and laziness), is not altogether clear.

It should not be overlooked that the Inland Revenue has a substantial vested financial interest in the public sale, which could have constituted a factor in the Government's not being prepared to follow Lord Rosebery's example in the acceptance of a potential financial loss in the interests of our cultural heritage. So much for 'calculating commercialism'!

DENIS MAHON

33 Cadogan Square
London SW1

The Boss Replies

Sir, Since a left-wing commentator has managed to write an article about Grunwick without accusing me of being a 'fascist' or a 'racist', or a '19th-century employer', it may be possible to have a rational discussion in the NEW STATESMAN about a dispute which has great significance for this country.

Quibbling about minor facts is a tedious method of argument, and truth to tell Mr Jake Podorelski ('The Strike That Goes On and On', NS 1 April) has been much more accurate in his summation of what has happened than many of his colleagues. He concedes that those dismissed were not members of APEX or any other trade union when they walked off the job. He admits that APEX is a 'strange' union to represent them and that it gave them retrospective membership because it saw an opportunity to further its own interests in other recognition disputes. It should be noted that every effort was made to obscure these facts. The issue has been represented as one in which the employer sacked his workers because they belonged to a trade union or expressed the wish to belong. At a very late stage this wholly false claim has been dropped. Grunwick is a non-union company, but not an anti-union company. Never at any time while in employment did a single one of those dismissed ask for trade-union bargaining rights to be recognised. But if Mr Podorelski does not distort facts, he is selective about those that he uses. From the many others I could mention, may I stress just three?

(1) Sixty of those dismissed took their case to the Industrial Tribunal alleging 'unfair dismissal.' The Tribunal found by unanimous verdict that they were not unfairly dismissed.

(2) Some of those dismissed were students employed on a temporary basis. Indeed one of their spokesmen who tours the country receiving standing ovations for his heroic fight against vicious capitalists worked for Grunwick for precisely two weeks.

(3) The private market research firm that took the ballot of Grunwick employees is MORI, universally respected for its integrity and employed on occasion by the Labour Party. MORI devised and supervised its own ballot, which was secret and properly conducted in every respect without any interference from management. It is a bad habit of the Left to carp about democratic verdicts that they happen to dislike.

What lies behind the Grunwick affair is something that I fancy I have read about in the articles of your former editor, Mr Paul Johnson. It is the belief that trade unions should be allowed to do exactly as they like without regard to law, commonsense, or the interests of the general public. According to this philosophy it is perfectly proper for APEX to recruit dismissed employees and then conduct a tactical recognition dispute. The employer does not immediately submit? How monstrous! Then his mail ought to be 'blacked' illegally. If that cannot be done, then what about illegally cutting off his gas, water and elec-

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tricity? How dare an employer resist for one moment the demands of a trade-union? Is anyone so naïve as to suppose that those dismissed wish to return in order to do a fair day's work? Led by people who proclaim their hatred for capitalism, their detestation of profit, their contempt for the interests of consumers, they wish to return only to organise strikes, official or otherwise, disrupt production and manufacture disputes. Once back inside Grunwick, what possible chance is there that they could be controlled in any way in the interests of producing goods, which is what industry happens to be about?

There's the rub. Much contemporary left-wing opinion thinks business exists only to manufacture wage-packets. If the business, through disputes, misses its delivery dates, raises its prices and becomes unprofitable, what does that matter?

Mr Podorelski concedes that Grunwick is 'cheaper, faster and better' than its competitors. If it were not there would be no jobs for anybody. Those who work for Grunwick are fairly paid and fairly treated. They could join trade unions if they wished and contrary to the impression given, the majority of them are not Asians. Perhaps more attention should be paid to their views and votes, and less to those who see industry only as an opportunity for political action and ideological warfare.

GEORGE WARD
Managing Director
Grunwick Processing Laboratories Ltd
Willesden, NW10

What We Must Do

Sir, The public schools, far from 'rating no mention' in 'What We Must Do' (Letters 1 April), are described on page 8 of that pamphlet as 'a divisive influence'. The authors did not waste space repeating the Labour Party's official policy of expunging the privileges enjoyed by the public schools, since they are all in agreement with it. But at the start of the current session of Parliament, in the debate on the Queen's Speech, I said:

> It is a matter of great regret to me that we still propose to leave the privileged status of the public schools untouched . . . I want the Government to strip them of all those elements of public subsidy which they enjoy. Those elements are considerable. The chief one is that they are treated for rating and taxation purposes as charities, which itself is a bad joke in view of the segment of the population for which they largely cater. There are others too. They are exempted from the rationing of teachers, to which schools in the state sector are subject. In practice they are exempted from the rationing of school buildings, unlike the state sector. And it does not end even there. It has been calculated that the amount of indirect public subvention received by private schools amounts to about 30 per cent of their total budget . . . There is a need in any system for boarding education. But the unacceptable aspect of public schools at the moment is that their wealth enables them to pre-empt educational resources such as teachers, buildings and good pupil-teacher ratios, and then to make those facilities available to families on the basis not of educational or social needs but of ability to pay.

BRYAN MAGEE
House of Commons

Abortion No Answer

Sir, Donald Gould really is at his most depressing when he mixes inconsistency with vituperation (NS 8 April). In accordance with polemical tradition, what he says is not wholly wrong nor completely right. Let us try to sort out some of the muddle. Mr Benyon has never disguised his anti-abortion views. He holds (does not impose) a minority point of view but in ethical questions that is irrelevant to the case, as any abolitionist should know. He has proposed reforms which stand a chance of being made law – that's the art of democratic politics. The Bill is a set of protective clauses which Dr Gould cannot fault and which a majority in the House of Commons has twice considered justified. Unwanted people are in the vast majority. It is because most of us believe that the end does not justify the means that we do not yet drop an H-bomb on India or gas our mental hospitals. Dr Gould's courageous compassion seems inordinately distributed. So far, it has contributed nothing to sober discussion of the laws regulating abortion.

ANDREW HOLTON
6 Estcourt Avenue
Leeds

York Siege

Sir, Mr Richard Burden gives you his account (Letters 8 April) of recent events at York. His perspectives are instructive. Readers may not find the minutiae of committee talkathons at York of consuming interest, but since Mr Burden's letter reflects matters of more general interest on the debating style of some of our student politicoes these days, let us look at it more closely.

Note (1) the terminal threat, final sentence. If, next term, the university authorities do not go along with Mr Burden's way of thinking, then 'three times as many students will be back in Heslington Hall'. Since the *actual* numbers of those occupying dropped sharply, to about 25 (by day) in the peaceful ambience I noted in my article (that is, 1 per cent of the student body) this is just possible, and it is possible that the academic staff *may* let defenceless members of the administrative staff (who had nothing whatever to do with decisions on fees) be bundled out of their offices again. After all, they have no power to fight back, and they can always catch up later with the tedious business of trying to squeeze grants out of recalcitrant local authorities, doing the paper work for student health care, persuading the local police not to press charges in the fairly regular flow of minor offences, etc. etc. In any case, they can always catch up during the university vacation, can't they? On the other hand, it's also possible that the academic staff may not be quite so long suffering after Mr Burden's next rally.

Note (2) the elliptical falsehood with the built-in face-saver: 'I cannot recall whether . . . Mr Ions made one of his infrequent appearances at General Academic Board'. Mr Burden has the Minutes. Let him check the meetings of 7 December, 8 February and 8 March, where I and my colleagues devoted something like six hours to discussing, reading, and listening to Mr Burden's homilies on the arts of deficit financing (briefly, unload it on the taxpayer). As for Mr Burden's innuendo. I wouldn't normally dine out on the fact, but I herewith offer Mr Burden £100 if, after going through 14 years of Minutes in the Registrar's files, he locates a member of the university who has put in more attendances than myself between 1963 and 1977. I make no promises for the next 14 years or even the next four.

The issue of fees was, and is, a serious and a complex matter and some of us have spent more time talking over it with our students, and writing to MPs, than are dreamt of in Mr Burden's direct action philosophies. We also informed the Vice-Chancellor that we are prepared to dig into our own pockets to help needy students. But equally, academics have better reason than any other profession to know that their bargaining position is weak, and that universities are not too popular with the public *precisely* because of the antics of Mr Burden and his predecessors over the years. If Mr Burden doubts this, he can use his student union office to good effect in his coming (expiring) term. Send out a questionnaire to local taxpayers and ratepayers and invite their opinions on holding fees constant for our £1,000 a (30-week) year elite, and for *all* overseas students, when the prices of all goods and services are going up by about 16 to 18 per cent a year. Then print, if printable, the replies.

EDMUND IONS
Department of Politics
University of York

The Body-Carers

Sir, What's really pernicious about the Flora ad. (NS 25 March) that Nell Dunn castigated last week is that it perpetuates a couple of equally insulting stereotypes. First, there's the dutiful wife, happy with her role in the kitchen, preparing nourishing meals for the head of the house. Then there's the man, carving his way in the big wide world, bread-winning at a rate of knots, proud of being useless at home and gaily admitting that he can neither boil an egg nor, presumably, decide whether he prefers butter to margarine.

Of course there are still plenty of both about, but it's a shame the Flora people are confident that there are enough among NEW STATESMAN readers to make it worthwhile to place a full page ad. What about it, lads and lasses?

RON BROWN
3 Forest Drive East
London E11

Gifted Royalty

Sir, Like Arthur Marshall (NS 1 April) I had supposed that royalty did not accept presents and would feel obliged to return them, until I read Thea Holme's account in *Chelsea* of 'Miser Neild', who lived the life of a pauper in a tall, empty, cobwebbed house in Cheyne Walk. He died in 1852. 'When his will was opened,' says Mrs Holme, 'it was found that he had left the bulk of his estate amounting to half a million pounds, to Queen Victoria.' And with a demure composure much like Mr Marshall's she adds: 'The Queen graciously accepted her legacy . . .'

Perhaps a legacy is a special case; returning it, for example, might present problems. Still, the Queen could then have made a handsome present to her subjects. When she wrote to her Uncle Leopold of her good fortune he replied, 'That Mr Neild should have left that great fortune to you delighted me. It gives the possibility of forming a private fortune for the Royal Family, the necessity for which no one can deny.'

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Hugh Thomas

Diana in the Crossways

A Life of Contrast: An Autobiography by DIANA MOSLEY *Hamish Hamilton* £5.50

'As a human being,' Edmund Gosse wrote in the *DNB* of the first Lord Redesdale,

> he was a sort of Prince Charming: with his fine features, sparkling eyes, erect and elastic figure and, in his last years, his burnished curls, he was an universal favourite, a gallant figure of an English gentleman, solidly English in reality, but polished and sharpened by travel and foreign society.

Lord Redesdale also had an unquenchable enthusiasm for Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose *Foundations of the Twentieth Century* he translated from the original German; and Chamberlain held that it was the mission of the Teutonic nations to rebuild Europe on German principles.

Prince Charming passed on both his charm and his propensity to strong passions to his grandchildren in the Mitford family: Unity Mitford admired Germany as much as H. S. Chamberlain did, Jessica became a communist, and later even Nancy, a wonderful wit, had an uncritical admiration for De Gaulle. Diana Mitford, who now publishes her memoirs, also admired Hitler, though less enthusiastically than Unity did, and she married the leader of English Fascism.

Now in the 1970s communism is discredited and democracy seems again to be in decline, so that at first sight it's surprising that Fascism has not made a general recovery. Sometime in the Thirties, Mussolini said to Starace, the secretary-general of the Fascist party, 'Let's see if the wine of *squadrismo* which we've had in the cellar for so long is still good. Open up a few bottles.' Mussolini later commented, 'The wine is still excellent. A few heads and a lot of radios were smashed . . .' Well, it has not happened quite like that, nor has historical revisionism discussed much whether, say, Eastern Europe wouldn't have been better off, in the long run, under German than Russian influence. No new version of Volkish philosophy is fashionable, nor has any statue to Dr Schacht been put up to commemorate his successful application of Keynesian economics. Fascism is still a very bad word.

In a way this may be unfair, as Diana Mosley plainly thinks. The tragedy of European Fascism has never been properly appreciated in our fortunate country. Many young Fascists were idealistic men in the 1930s. Stalin murdered as many people as Hitler did, and Mao's Tibetan *Anschluss* was as unjustified as was Hitler's with Austria. The reason, however, why Fascism and Nazism can never really be rehabilitated, whatever the evils of other systems, is that the murder of the European Jews (and gipsies) places them beyond the pale. That German outrage has come, rightly, to be regarded as an object lesson of the corruption of power, and, if we are reminded that other nations have done other unforgivable things, it can never be forgotten that that conscious killing of nearly 6 million people was carried out by the once popular leaders of a culturally and economically advanced European people, very close indeed to the English in blood and language.

Diana Mosley, it seems from this book, does not realise the enormity of the Nazis' actions. She does say, it is true, that the 'great and unforgivable crime of the German leaders was the killing of helpless prisoners', but that doesn't seem enough, and the effect of that comment is blunted by an attempt to equate the killing with the British delivery of the Cossacks to be murdered by Stalin. Nor is Diana Mosley correct in attributing the Jewish 'problem' in Germany to the greatly increased immigration of Jews from the East during the days of Weimar. That immigration was not substantial. To suggest that the rich Jews of the world should have financed the emigration of their co-religionaries in Germany (and presumably other countries which Germany stooped to conquer) forgets that many Eastern European cities had had Jewish majorities for centuries; indeed, many such cities were built by Jews. And then – where would they have gone?

'But Mr Brand, what would I do with a million Jews?' That remark of the British resident minister in the Middle East, Lord Moyne (who, by a coincidence entirely in character with Diana Mosley's unusual life, was the author's first father-in-law), to the man who in 1944 offered to exchange the Hungarian Jews for lorries would have been made by any English politician in the 1930s if a similar proposition had been put to him. The same thing would presumably have been said in rather stronger language by Sir Oswald Mosley, whose speeches before the war do not suggest that he would have liked to have seen the entire German Jewish community turn up in the East End of London.

The unspeakable conditions in which Hitler's opponents, real or presumed, were held during the second world war cause the reader to raise an eyebrow also at Diana Mosley's account of her days in gaol. Of course, they must have been intensely disagreeable, and probably they were unjustifiable and unnecessary, but the war was after all primarily a war against Fascism (which, when she was imprisoned, we seemed to be losing), so what could she really have expected?

A refusal to face these two major points immeasurably weakens the impact of this book which is otherwise sharp, amusing and well written. I particularly liked the uncanny way that the characters in a witty narrative suddenly stop being Lord Berners or Harold Acton or other friendly names, and become Putzi Hanfstaengl, Magda Goebbels and Hitler. Diana Mosley's father ('Farve') and Hitler both, we read, disliked lipstick. The picture of Hitler here is sympathetic, and that may shock some, but it is reasonable to be reminded that Hitler could be good company. It is ridiculous to think that all our enemies are charmless. I believe Hitler was bad not mad. Diana and her sister Unity, two original and beautiful girls who made jokes and answered back, evidently brought out a benign side in Hitler and, rather than condemn them for being so friendly, we should surely regret that they weren't with him more: a sense of humour gives a sense of proportion, and that might possibly have restrained the Führer from taking the decisions that later ruined Germany and Europe. It is therefore to be regretted that Unity Mitford did not displace Eva Braun. Hitler behaved well when Unity, honourably aghast (as I see it) at the prospect of war between her real and her adopted countries, shot herself in the head.

The Nazi regime did, of course, revive both the German economy and German morale, though it doesn't seem that Hitler himself deserves credit for the German economic miracle of the 1930s. On the other hand, the author is wrong to say that 'as the years went by [i.e., 1933-39], almost all the prisoners were released from concentration camps': there were 25,000 detainees in 1939. Then her chapter comparing Churchill (a cousin, like nearly everyone else mentioned) with Hitler reads oddly, as no doubt it was meant to: quite apart from Churchill's love of 'the fundamental principles of British liberties', of which he spoke in a memorandum to the Home Secretary in 1940 when asking for better treatment of the Mosleys in gaol (see Vol. II of his war memoirs), Churchill was fighting a rearguard action in defence of an old empire while Hitler was destroying the prospects of a newly united people by staggering errors of judgment. How could Hitler have brought himself gratuitously to declare war on the US in 1941, for example, when the US had decided matters in 1918? Why was he almost as savage in his treatment of Russian minorities as he was to the Jews, when, with their help, he might have beaten Russia?

Diana Mosley's defence of her husband's opposition to war in 1939 raises other problems, though she has a rational point to make, and one which would have gained many adherents, I suspect, by now, among historians at least, if it had not been for their knowledge of what the New Order actually meant later on. Britain might certainly have given Germany a free hand in Eastern Europe and Russia and, if Hitler had proposed such a thing in tactful and cunning terms, our government might have been tempted by the idea. But a concession of that sort would not have removed the danger of war in the end against a greatly strengthened Germany. Of course, the war did conclude very badly in 1945, the Rus-

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sian zone of influence was extended to the Elbe, but, after all, who started it? Nor is it certain that the Russian grip over Eastern Europe will last forever. And then, from what is known of Nazi methods – after, say, the occupation of Poland in 1939 – the acceptance by Britain and France of German hegemony in Europe might have meant the massacre not only of the Jews but many other peoples: the 'final solution' of the Polish, and of the Czech, problems might easily have soon seemed enticing.

Diana Mosley was not a Fascist when she met M. (as Sir Oswald Mosley is referred to in this book) and her support of him, at the beginning, was based on love, not ideology. By the time they met, he had already burned his boats with the Labour Party as well as with the New Party, and he had been to see Mussolini in Rome on the journey which decided him to seek to become the leader of the English branch of a universal movement which, at that time, seemed in southern and central Europe to be carrying all before it. Diana Mosley does not seem to have had any influence over her husband's career in the 1930s, nor does her book add much on this score to what M. himself wrote in his able autobiography or what Robert Skidelsky put together in his biography. The author is, of course, entirely right in thinking it regrettable that a man of M.'s qualities was excluded from public life so finally. But was this not due to his own refusal to make even a tactful apology – and to change his mind on tactics? Fascists in Italy, Pétainists in France, Nazis in Germany, including people who had done really questionable things, re-established themselves after fairly insincere concessions that they had made mistakes. Mosley preferred to wait for another crisis of the dimensions of 1931 and, though he was right in thinking that it would come, he was in no position to exploit it.

Diana Mosley attributes most of her husband's difficulties, from meetings broken up in the 1930s onwards, to the communists. That is too simplistic. We do not have to choose 'either the communists or the Nazis' as Tom Mitford thought he had to in 1929. Indeed, as the years go by, with any luck, both those extreme creeds as actually practised by Hitler and Stalin are already beginning to seem much of a muchness. Fascism was, of course, opposed by the dull and second-rate (stuffy conservative solicitors with double barrelled names, as one of M.'s erstwhile followers, Bill Allen put it) and it is easy to see that, to impatient young men, the names of such as Eyres-Monsell or Joynson-Hicks must have fallen far short of ringing a tocsin. Still, second-rate men often stick more firmly than one might think to first-rate ideas: for example, the idea that once a party or even a state regards itself as above the law, there is no security for anyone. Another fairly close cousin of Diana Mosley's, Bertrand Russell, made that point very clearly in 1920 when resisting the temptation of seeing Soviet Russia in a favourable light; and Diana Mosley's own favourite author, Goethe, said the same in lines which she must have translated: 'The Master first reveals himself in limitation and only Law can give us liberty.'

Polly Toynbee

Just Sign Here

The Confait Confessions by CHRISTOPHER PRICE and JONATHAN CAPLAN *Marion Boyars* £4.95

Maxwell Confait was a sad half-caste transvestite male prostitute, saving up for hormone treatment to grow breasts. He was found strangled in his first floor back room in April 1972 by a fireman, in a burning house in Catford. Two days later three local boys were picked up by the police and charged with murder and arson, after signing confessions. As the authors say, a confession in the hand is almost always worth a conviction in court. Often the outcome of a case is decided not in the courtroom, but in a police station interrogation room.

The boys later denied murdering Confait, or ever going to the house, and said they had made the 'confessions' under pressure. Two of them said they had been assaulted, one of them was retarded, with a mental age of eight, and they all said they were told they could go home quickly if they signed.

The weight of these 'confessions' rode roughshod over a lot of other evidence; the backward boy had a cast-iron alibi, the fire was not started in the way the confessions describe, the victim had been dead long before the boys could have been there. No fingerprints or witnesses or evidence of any kind was produced against them. They were convicted on the strength of their confessions alone, despite the rest of the evidence.

Colin Lattimore, the retarded boy, had a father who was determined to get the boys cleared, and he campaigned long and hard. Christopher Price, one of the co-authors and Member of Parliament for the boys, became deeply involved in the campaign, asking constant questions in the House, writing articles and getting journalists interested. Eventually a *This Week* documentary tipped the balance in the boys' favour at the Home Office. The case was finally sent back to the Appeal Court, where the verdict was quashed in October 1975, more than three years after the murder.

The government then set up a committee of inquiry under Sir Henry Fisher. They have spent three months taking evidence about the case, and will report soon. The questions raised by the case are many and complex. But most important is how did Detective Chief Supt. Alan Jones come to elicit three confessions to murder from three innocent boys?

The confessions themselves were curious jumbled documents. They produced not a single new fact about the murder that the police did not already know at the time. Once the first boy, Colin Lattimore, the one who was retarded, had made his 'confession' it was presumably easier to get one from the other two. Ronnie Leighton was not bright, and Ahmet Salih, the third defendant, was the youngest at only 14. It is hard for most of us to imagine any innocent person, even with the mental age of eight, signing a confession to murder (unless subjected to the most hideous torture, which no one is suggesting) and yet, amazingly these boys appear to have done so. They had already admitted setting alight a store shed and a derelict house, and they continued to admit this. Perhaps once they'd been caught committing one crime it was easy to intimidate them into confessing a crime they hadn't done.

The parents of two of the boys were present at the signing of the confessions (though significantly not at the obtaining and dictating of them), and also signed. Mrs Leighton, Ronnie's mother said later, 'They say "sign", you naturally sign. I mean, I was just as scared as Ronnie.' The book strongly suggests that police interviews

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should be tape-recorded and that disputed uncorroborated confessions should never be the sole basis for conviction.

This is a short journalistic book, telling the story straight without frills. Like so much investigative journalism, it is enormously valuable, provides an essential public service, and shows that the power of public opinion can be mobilised by the media to right wrongs in the face of the whole establishment.

However, I have to admit that I find stories of this kind (like many of these long 'Insight' type of articles in the Sunday papers) a struggle to read. It may be because, as with this book, we know the ending right from the start, which begins 'This is a story of miscarriage of justice.' The villains (police, lawyers, Home Office) will lose out to the heroes (campaigning father, press and author Christopher Price), and there will be no unpredictable, grey, subtle characters in the middle, nothing to surprise. There was the wrongful arrest, the wrong judgment, the long fight for justice, the victory, and the solemn reminder that this sort of thing happens all the time – a moral tale of our times.

Of course I am glad that the case was taken up and investigated and well written up at the time with the result that the boys were freed. But I am not convinced that it makes a good read as a book, especially now the boys are out and wrong has already been righted. We await, however, with excitement the findings of the Fisher inquiry.

THE Carlos Complex

Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne

". . . enthralling account of the ramifications of the organisation known as Terror International."
Patrick Cosgrave – The Spectator

"Consistently lucid and impeccably documented."
David Leitch – The Sunday Times

". . . the most valuable account to date available of the Venezuelan-born international terrorist."
Paul Wilkinson – The Daily Telegraph

"A wide and well researched study."
Martin Bell – The Listener

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Female Economy

The Watsons by JANE AUSTEN and ANOTHER *Peter Davies* £3.90
Shadows on Our Skin by JENNIFER JOHNSTON *Hamish Hamilton* £3.50
Sunrise by DOMINIC COOPER *Chatto* £3.95

More long-distance relations and soppy-minded well-wishers are poised maieutically about Jane Austen's unfinished *The Watsons* than medieval angelologists might decently have risked covening on the head of one of their theological pins. A. N. Other, assisted by a couple of great-great-great nieces, re-doing (the second ro-do; the first was by the niece's grand-daughter) niece Catherine Austen's novel of 1850, putatively based on knowledge of what *The Watsons* was to have been, allegedly gleaned from Jane's sister Cassandra and Catherine's step-mother (Jane's friend) Martha: why must the pin-heads shore their ruins about a great writer's fragments? It's quite a different story when, say, Kafka has actually written all the bits Max Brod sorts out, or when *Wives and Daughters* is left with only a couple of steps still to totter so that almost any old editor could safely hazard their destination. But of our volume's 26 chapters Jane Austen has only supplied a disproportionately meagre five.

What a five, though. Pre-*Mansfield Park* and *Emma* stuff, admittedly, and so not quite managing to bring off the arrival of the aristocratic Osborne set at the fustian delights of the Dorking ball that Emma Watson has been escorted to by her friends the Edwards, without sounding a mite like the juvenile Charlotte Brontë. But setting in motion a tough-minded Emma and a kind Elizabeth with a decrepit father and two sharply selfish sisters, and an awful sister-in-law to cope with. And, to boot, no money and few real marriage prospects. 'I would rather be teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a man I did not like', says Emma; 'I would rather do anything than be teacher at a school,' ripostes Elizabeth. That's the authentic Austen note of spinsterly desperation. So is Emma's reminder to Lord Osborne that 'Female economy will do a great deal, my lord, but it cannot turn a small income into a large one.' These heroines spare no one, not even themselves. Nor does their author go in for kindly sparing:

> Robert was carelessly kind, as became a prosperous man and a brother: more intent on settling with the post-boy, inveighing against the exorbitant advance in posting, and pondering over a doubtful half crown, than on welcoming a sister who was no longer likely to have any property for him to get the direction of.

More kin than kind, indeed. Emma 'was beginning to feel that a family party might be the worst of all parties'.

Most promisingly biting starters, these: but between niece and great-great-great nieces the family party has contrived a very un-Austen carry-on – the worst of all parties, in fact. Emma is plausibly sucked into the Osborne world and, still more plausibly, eventually marries Osborne's old tutor, the Rev. Mr Howard. But the imbroglio of jealous mother, dandified hangers-on, overheard troth-plighting, and (faint shades of Lydia and Wickham) threat of breach-of-promise action that nets a husband for another of the sisters, is sub-Victorian rubbish of the worst kind. Reproaches fail one. It's lower than Brontë-juvenile; it's a sub-Disraeli plot with no redeeming smartnesses of chat; it's Silver Fork with flaunted tarnish. And none of the limp attempts to instil the right tone (a mention of Johnson's Dictionary, a sneer or two at Methodisticality, the odd flash of spirited hatred) works. What this *The Watsons* amounts to is a travesty, a Mona Lisa with moustaches.

With relief, then, to a couple of fictions that are all their author's own work, even if each is little more than a short-story conception spun out nearer a conventional novel length. Jennifer Johnston writes with the deceptive fluency that only comes of the tightest control, and produces in *Shadows on Our Skin* an extremely attractive story about modern Londonderry whose superbly casual calm almost belies its insider's grasp of the hellish detail. Her account of Joseph Logan, an inattentive schoolboy, already promising to be a great wordsmith, who cannily treads the exploding minefield laid down by his bedridden father's generation of Free State heroes and his brother Brendan's Provo chums, is gripping (especially when he's left holding his brother's gun early one morning as the British Army bashes in the front-room windows). It's also movingly convincing (you simply don't, it's made clear, just turn over your Provo kin, Bishops and Peace-Marchers notwithstanding: Ulster's more complicated than that). And, to underline the complexity, we're left not knowing why Kathleen, lonely schoolteacher, befriends Joe and Brendan, nor what her engagement to a British soldier has to do with the interest in them she keeps up until the Boyos cut off her hair and send her packing.

Overtly more pretentious, Dominic Cooper's *Sunrise* goes for a sort of William Goldingesque primitivism. Munro, a slow-thinking Scot in his late fifties, quits the Kirk during his daughter's wedding service, fires his council house (his wife's plastic flowers and mantelpiece of knick-knackery particularly infuriate him), and runs for freedom. He's pretty earthy to start with: a forester, his hands (Cooper's good at this sort of description) are 'knotty and cut' (his fellow-parishioners have faces 'creased and scabbed'). But in his flight from his native island to his sister Bessie's croft, and then, hunted by imaginary agents of the law, scraping for very life across loch and hill, he's reduced still further to the level (it's continually harped on) of a beast. Occasionally *Sunrise* reads like *The Thirty-Nine Steps* minus its tension, and the hard, friendless consonantality of the world that Munro bangs against (a blunt stutter of *skarts*, *clegs*, *graip*, *fank*, *bothy*, *stabs* and all the rest) can get you down as Hopkins does. But, all in all, yielding man and unyielding nature are compellingly done.

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SCIENCE FICTION

J. G. Ballard

French Polish

Travelling towards Epsilon, an Anthology of French Science Fiction edited by MAXIM JAKUBOWSKI *New English Library* £4.95

The Martian Inca by IAN WATSON *Gollancz* £3.95

Man Plus by FREDERIK POHL *Gollancz* £3.75

For all its universal appeal, throughout most of the present century science fiction has remained an Anglo-American monopoly. Despite the immense influence of Jules Verne, few writers working outside the English language have been able to lay claim to even the smallest piece of the future. Perhaps because popular notions of the future have been expressed, until recently, almost exclusively in American terms, in the iconography of its cars, consumer goods and industrial design, no other country seemed able to present a coherent image of tomorrow, and British sf itself was often little more than a Home Counties transportation of California. Readers took for granted that sf was written by English or American authors, so much so that sf writers in France in the 1950s, even those writing in their own language for French magazines, were forced to adopt Anglo-Saxon pseudonyms such as Smith or Robinson – though, ironically, their American counterparts were named Asimov, Van Vogt and Heinlein.

Now at last, presumably as a consequence of declining popular interest in the American image of the future, sf writers of other nationalities are beginning to move in. Several volumes of Russian sf have been published here, a strangely grey and science-bound fiction enacted almost entirely in a series of vast laboratories and minuscule apartments, with a heavy dependence on hard technology and a careful avoidance of the psychological sciences, the Western sf writer's happy hunting ground. Curiously, given the Marxist imagination's powerful orientation towards the future, much Russian sf is set firmly in the present and pervaded by a profound sense of nostalgia.

With the possible exception of Japan, nowhere is sf now more popular than in France, and Maxim Jakubowski's anthology of French science fiction is one of the most interesting collections I have read. Free on the one hand from any need to trick out their narratives unnecessarily, thanks to the long French tradition of experimental writing, and on the other from the less happy effects of the polarisation between old and new waves that divided British and American sf ten years ago, the French writers seem refreshingly eclectic. Daniel Walther's 'The Gunboat *Dread*', a bizarre tale of sexual obsession set on an alien world, reads on one level like a planet yarn of the 1940s, but the author's powerful imagination and complete frankness show what hard-core space fiction might have become had it only escaped from the sexual puritanism of the commercial magazines of the day: Asimov re-written by Genet.

Since May 1968 many of the younger French writers have regarded sf as an explicitly political tool in a sense never dreamed of by the Anglo-Americans, most of whom anyway are rigidly right-wing, surprisingly so for the practitioners of a fiction ostensibly devoted to change and possibility. It is hard to visualise Heinlein or Vonnegut writing a story like Dominique Douay's 'Thomas', 1975 prize-winner for the best French sf story. A powerful study of the dangers of applying computerised control techniques to the treatment of mental patients, the story mixes computer jargon with proletarian street argot straight out of Raymond Queneau. Like many of the stories in the anthology, it impresses by its freshness of approach, and by the sense that sf is sufficiently versatile to take its place as a form of realist as well as of imaginative fiction.

The Martian Inca is the third novel by Ian Watson, the most interesting British sf writer of ideas – or, more accurately, the only British sf writer of ideas. Watson's *The Embedding* was the most remarkable first novel I have read for ten years, and the best sf novel since Bernard Wolfe's aristocrat of science fiction, *Limbo* 90. Like Wolfe, he writes a heady, zest-filled prose that whips up a froth of speculation about anthropology and linguistics, topology, structuralism and astro-physics – in fact, after reading Watson's novels one has the first dazed impression that there is virtually nothing that they *aren't* about. *The Martian Inca* follows Watson's practice of bringing together in a complex metaphor two apparently unrelated ideas. An unmanned Russian spacecraft, carrying soil samples gathered from the surface of Mars, crashes into a remote Bolivian village. The Indians who salvage it fall into a profound and mysterious coma, from which the hero emerges convinced that he is the Inca reborn. Meanwhile a manned American craft lands on Mars, and the crew find themselves contaminated by the same hallucinatory soil. A huge vision unfolds of the transformation of man and his universe, subsumed within some kind of transcendental geometry. Unremittingly inventive, the novel contains superb descriptive writing within a ceaseless flow of ideas.

Fifteen years ago, in *New Maps of Hell*, Kingsley Amis described Frederik Pohl as the 'novelist of economic man' and speculated that sf as a whole would probably evolve in the direction of sociological criti-

Gollancz SF
SPRING 1977

Isaac Asimov
The Bicentennial Man

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Wonderworlds

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Medusa's Children

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Shadrach in the Furnace

George R. Stewart
Earth Abides

Ian Watson
The Martian Inca

COMING SOON

Alfred Bester
The Light Fantastic

Michael Bishop
Stolen Faces

Philip K. Dick &
Roger Zelazny
Deus Irae

Ursula Le Guin
The Word for World is Forest

Frederik Pohl
Gateway

Wilson Tucker
The Lincoln Hunters

Robert Silverberg
Downward to the Earth

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cism. In fact, it has moved in the opposite direction altogether, ever deeper into psychological fantasy, and Pohl, without doubt one of its most talented writers, has moved with it. There has always been a strong organic and surrealist element in Pohl's fiction, a sense of reality suddenly skewing sideways into some visceral nightmare, nowhere better shown than in his brilliant new novel *Man Plus*. An obsession with man/machine links runs through much of Pohl's fiction, and this novel is the story of an astronaut modified in every conceivable way to survive in the harsh conditions of the Martian surface. With multi-faceted eyes, a rhinoceros-hide skin and huge bat-like wings ('He looks like Oberon,' one of his designers remarks amiably), the astronaut is transformed into a grotesque monster, the processes of his brain regulated and enhanced by the computer he carries on his back.

What is so compelling and so unsettling about Pohl's vision is that he reveals it to us from within the mind of the astronaut, so that we feel these extensions to sight and touch, thought and movement, and the whole deformed and fluctuating world he perceives, are completely normal. Eventually, on Mars itself, the computer malfunctions, time and space melt into a Dalinian nightmare, the crazed central nervous system of the astronaut overwhelms the landscape. Yet all the way to the startling denouement, one is carried along by the total rationality of Pohl's narrative. Without doubt, his best novel since *The Space Merchants*.

Michael Moorcock

Club Together

Science Fiction At Large edited by PETER NICHOLLS *Gollancz* £5.95

Of the 11 contributors to this book ('A collection of essays by various hands, about the interface between Science Fiction and Reality'), six of them are known to me personally, one of them is my ex-wife's boyfriend and another is a close friend whose work, in the main, I greatly admire. Of all literary worlds the sf world is probably the most incestuous since Bloomsbury. Authors double as critics and editors to discuss and anthologise one another's work; they attend the same conventions, meetings, parties; sometimes they even go on coach outings together. As an illustrator I know remarked recently during the first sf convention I've attended for many years, 'The percentage of syphilis among sf people is higher than among Marine veterans returning from Vietnam. They are all,' he added, with sardonic disapproval, 'screwing one another.' Hidden resentments proliferate, of course, but rarely, for social reasons, fully reveal themselves.

At this stage, if I belonged to the sf fraternity (which I do not), I should say 'However' and make some hypocritical remark about the honest virtues of the genre and its addicts. There's a fair bit of howevering going on in this book. Most fraternities breed hypocrites and reduce the aspirations of the best. More than once I have been shocked to receive fulsome, insincere reviews of some of my worst work by friends who presumably expect me to repeat the favour. It's one of the reasons I won't, as a rule, review sf. I like almost all the contributors to the book and I feel embarrassed for them: they should have known better than to have taken part in this sorry symposium.

The three 'scientists' roped in (the book reprints a series of lectures delivered in 1975 at the ICA) are Edward de Bono, John Taylor and Alvin Toffler, who are all quite as boring and only superficially less confused than the majority of the writers. Ursula K. Le Guin's piece is possibly the most hypocritical, Harry Harrison's the most specific about his own work, Philip K. Dick's the most lunatic, Thomas M. Disch's the most disappointing (since he's by far the best writer represented), Robert Sheckley's is the most bland (although blandness is what links many of them), John Brunner's the most admirable and rational (he attacks the pseudo-science of Von Daniken *et al* and its acceptance by the scientific illiterates who populate the media) and Alan Garner's the most honest. Garner's moving essay is also the only one which does not in some way denigrate his profession or audience. Peter Nicholls is the most confused. His claim that sf is primarily a literature of metaphor is fair enough, but his general argument is as mixed as the metaphors of most of sf's practitioners, whose adherence to genre conventions obviously distorts any personal metaphors they might come up with. The 'New Worlds' school of the Sixties and Seventies set out to destroy those conventions in order to liberate the individual imaginative writer (Nicholls calls this school anarchistic and elitist. It is, in fact, puritanical and partisan).

There are perhaps a dozen good writers who are claimed by the sf field as their own and these writers are used time after time to show that the genre in itself is somehow worth reading. It's a bit like saying all thrillers have merit because Chandler wrote some. Good sf criticism can't be produced by these apologists. Studies of individual authors can be written. Ballard, Bester, M. J. Harrison, Disch, Aldiss or even Arthur C. Clarke can be discussed on their own merits, but few of them are otherwise linked in style, subject matter, literary intention or literary antecedents. They happen (like Vonnegut, but unlike, say, Nabokov) to have published some of their work in sf magazines and this entitles them, whether they like it or not, to be enrolled in the sf 'field'.

Generic sf is primarily a naïve American form, like jazz, and primarily the province of the social critic or at best third-rate socio-literary critics like Conquest or Fiedler. Boring comparisons are frequently drawn between popular music and sf (Verdi, Beiderbecke, Hendrix have all been cited in their time). Sometimes popular idioms attract the young because it is easier to aspire to be a Gershwin rather than an

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Ives. Anxieties are reduced, as in so much modern teaching, by reducing aspirations. But, in common with the rock musician, the sf writer who grows bored with familiar tricks and aspires too high is astonished to find himself attacked with greatest savagery by his own kind and by those critics who felt safe in a provincial atmosphere they found initially less rigorous. Innocently, he becomes a threatening force.

In the Sixties, pulp sf and rock-and-roll offered a fresh idiom attracting many talented people. Little criticism existed then to make them feel self-conscious. Here were forms which might become vehicles for innovative ideas which might appeal to a popular audience. Some people were successful; most became quickly cynical. Many of the best musicians or writers of that period have either faded out in nostalgic self-parody or turned their backs on the scene altogether. As rock music declines into cliché and decadence, so the critical works, picture books, the encyclopedias proliferate. Last year there were umpteen sf picture books, dozens of critical books published, and now at least three firms in England alone are producing ambitious encyclopedias. Those writers who help in this tiresome exploitation – as critics, compilers of old magazine covers, lecturers, writers of histories – are all conspiring to encourage the stultification and self-consciousness so many of them already mourn.

It will pass: the sf genre will maintain its adherents, like the mystery, the western and the romance, but it already has little claim to be anything more than routine escapist fiction whose main attraction is in the familiarity of its tropes. The sooner the best writers refuse to identify themselves with the fraternity (by, among other things, not allowing themselves to be used by Mr Nicholls and his like) the sooner they can be treated as individual writers of merit – as such writers used to be treated before what Alan Garner calls the 'shoddy neologism' (sf) was coined for the convenience of timid publishers and overworked literary editors.

Bob Shaw

Tango Time

The Condition of Muzak by MICHAEL MOORCOCK *Allison & Busby* £4.50 and £1.95

The most frightening words I ever heard came from the lips of Richard Attenborough, being interviewed about the making of the film, *Oh! What A Lovely War*. He mentioned, almost *en passant*, that hundreds of extras were issued with uniforms on a totally random basis – but at coffee breaks those dressed up as officers segregated themselves from those dressed as rankers. It means, in effect, that our cherished concept of individual identity is not really valid – and this is the uneasy premise upon which Michael Moorcock has based his tetralogy of Jerry Cornelius novels, the fourth of which has now been published.

The Condition of Muzak – like *The Final Programme, A Cure For Cancer, The English Assassin* and some related works – continues Moorcock's harlequinade theme and brings it to a climax, though climax may be too simplistic a term in the Cornelius context of a universe in which time and location are wild variables, where endings are hardly ever final, and where the characters have a Tom-and-Jerry-like capacity for resurrecting themselves from personal calamity.

In *The Condition of Muzak* the Cornelius family – plus the enigmatic figures of Una Persson, Bishop Beesley, Miss Brunner and the others who make up their circle of friends/enemies – are shown again performing all the gyrations of the Entropy Tango, but this time we are aware of the dance slowing down. Jerry Cornelius himself begins to lose his vital force, and near the end of the book the death of his mother is presented as a real and final demise, in a scene which derives considerable power and emotion from that very fact.

This break with the spirit of the original *commedia dell'arte*, in which the characters are immortally free to appear in any time or place, probably reflects the decline of harlequinade itself – to Moorcock's sorrow – and in a coda we are given a quotation from an old *Lilliput* magazine which begins, 'But Harlequin's domination has waned . . .'

It is impossible to summarise briefly the plot of *The Condition of Muzak* – were it possible the author might feel his achievement had not equalled his intent – but the inventive, image-sparking quality of Moorcock's writing is there on every page as the spotlight darts relentlessly from scene to scene, showing Cornelius becoming the myth-hero of dozens of war-sired emergent nations as he flits through time and space in his twelve-engined Dornier flying boat or in his unhandy Duesenberg motor car, becoming general, fugitive, statesman, actor or lead guitarist with the Deep Fix as the changing circumstances require.

Every fiction writer whose output of books has gone into two figures has qualms when he thinks of the number of times he has settled for a banality to fill in the business which accompanies dialogue; but where others might say, 'I lit a cigarette', Moorcock, with a seeming lack of effort, writes, 'He put both his hands into a lattice of water, causing the fountain to alter its note.'

Throughout the book there is great visual emphasis on dress and details of uniforms and brand names, which is entirely appropriate to its theme, and after a while the reader comes to see and accept that the costume and the mask have a profound influence on the wearer. The chaos that ensues – as chaos must do when the accepted invariant points of time, location and identity are discarded – is well portrayed by Moorcock, and Cornelius himself says:

> There aren't any [patterns]. Not really. The disordered mind sees order everywhere – systems take shape from the movement of the wind in the leaves of the trees – patterns emerge as the mad eye selects only what it wishes to see. Patterns are madness, for the most part.

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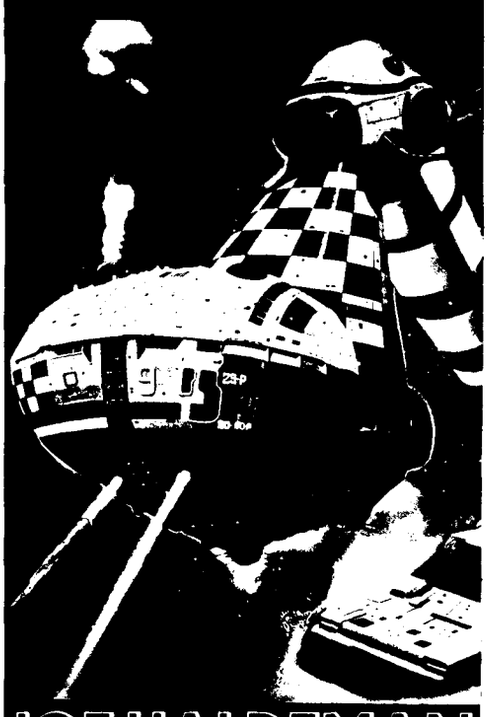
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This, of course, is outright heresy as far as most writers and readers of science fiction are concerned, a denial of virtually everything in the rationale of the prevailing reason-supersedes-instinct school – but then the marvellous thing about science fiction has always been that it easily accommodates so many diverse elements, and thus defies all attempts to define it. Happily, books such as *The Condition of Muzak* make science fiction too slippery, too elusive and perhaps too muscular for the constraining nets of the categorisers.

Brian Aldiss

Loopholes

The Iron Sun: Crossing the Universe Through Black Holes by ADRIAN BERRY *Cape* £3.95

The Next 200 Years: A Scenario for America and the World by HERMAN KAHN, WILLIAM BROWN and LEON MARTEL *Associated Business Programmes* £5.95

Adrian Berry is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and a member of the staff of the *Daily Telegraph* to boot. In this book, he suggests that we – mankind – build our own black holes in space and pop through them, to materialise elsewhere in the universe. He gives reasons why this course of action is necessary.

This modest proposal is set out with an attractive innocence and a care for the stupidest reader which would melt a heart of titanium. The stars are millions of times farther from us than the farthest of our planets, Mr Berry tells us. All history shows that it is desirable to get there as soon as possible and develop them in the way that we have already developed Tasmania, Bikini, Coney Island and other remote places. The problem is how to get there.

It costs money. However, it has been estimated that the wealth of the human race, the gross world product, was about 5 trillion US dollars in 1974 and, assuming an annual growth rate of three percent, we can readily understand that a citizen of the year 2215 will probably be about a thousand times richer than his counterpart today, and thus well able to invest in black holes, or whatever catches his fancy.

Although there are no natural laws governing increasing wealth, space travel is different. When it comes to buzzing through space, one bangs one's head on the wretched Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity, which postulates many foolish things. For instance, if you set out in a spaceship during the middle of the Carboniferous Age (to get away from all that coal, let's say) and travelled here and there at the speed of light for ten years, you would return to Earth only to find that you had missed the dinosaurs altogether, and probably hit the Angevins instead. Also, at such speeds – according to this same Einstein – you would contract until you were a mere photographic image of infinite mass.

If we are to move freely round the universe, and not become a nation of photographic images, we need a better way of doing things. Fortunately, Mr Berry has found a loophole in Einstein's equations (I knew it, I knew it!). The equations only forbid faster-than-light travel in *this* universe; the small print says nothing about taking short cuts through other universes – and this is what we must do.

Black holes defy topology. Black holes are three times as massive as the sun; the matter has collapsed in on itself; light cannot escape from its surface, and so it is called a black hole. (In fact, latest news suggests that there are black holes scudding about no bigger than my head, but I cite the example Mr Berry uses.) After more patient exposition, we understand that black holes are rotating very fast, say one thousand times per second, so that they naturally suffer from equatorial bulge. Ordinary black holes are useless to an astronaut, but a Kerr black hole, properly navigated, will take him through an Einstein-Rosen bridge (which we may liken to Edgar Allen Poe's famous maelstrom) into another part of the universe. There's a hole in the middle of a black hole, like the hole in an LP: physics says there must be. The navigation problems involved are tricky, but nothing that a 2215 pocket calculator will be unable to handle.

It is at this point that Mr Berry gets into his stride, or, to put it in his own words, 'I now come to a proposal which may, at a first consideration, be regarded as raving insanity.' Second and third considerations do not much alter the picture, for Mr Berry suggests that we build a large fleet of robot spaceships, which will act as ramjets and – with the aid of huge magnetic fields – gather together interstellar dust (waiting around for the asking) and build our own black hole just a convenient light year from the solar system.

The robot fleet then buzzes through the centre of this home-made hole and builds a second one, of the same mass as the first. By buzzing through that, they find themselves back in the vicinity of the sun once more. It may be difficult, even in the year 2215, when everyone is so rich, to persuade politicians to support this ambitious plan. We are given an imaginary dialogue between a politician (Commissioner Bandwagon) and an administrator of the twin-hole project (Dr Black), in which the commissioner is crushed by Black's rhetoric: 'We are giving humanity the chance to colonise millions of habitable but uninhabited planets . . .'

Black clearly does not visualise that those millions of planets might be inhabited, and that those inhabitants would pour gleefully through his home-made hole much as the Boches and the Frogs were supposed to pour through any hypothetical Channel Tunnel.

This splendidly imaginative book is going to take the bread out of the mouths of science fiction writers. Mr Berry's last book proposed that we mine Jupiter, dismantling the whole planet if necessary – not the kind of volume one would want to fall into the hands of Rio Tinto Zinc. It was entitled *The Next Ten Thousand Years*. Herman Kahn, another thinker not unduly rattled by the grandiose, calls his new book more modestly *The Next 200 years.*

With the assistance of the staff of the Hudson Institute, futurologist Kahn has produced a sort of *Guinness Book of Hedged Bets*. Were colonisation in space to prove technologically feasible as well as achieving economic viability, then it could conceivably lead to a massive migration of populaton. Developing nations will have to make many difficult decisions in complex situations. New off-shore oil-drillings will be defeats in the eyes of some people but victories or reasonable compromises for others. If the Arctic ice cap melted, this would substantially raise the level of the oceans; on the other hand, a warmer average temperature might bring huge agricultural areas in Canada and Siberia into production. And one speculation that really did amaze me: 'Of primary importance to mankind is the maintenance of reasonable proportions in the chemical constituents of the biosphere.' You mean we need *air* to support life yet.

They are nothing if not realistic at the Hudson Institute, and for those fools among us who believed that utopia was about to be declared, a fatherly warning is given: 'The future may well hold in store not only the familiar "four horsemen" (war, famine, plague and civil disorder), but *more modern catastrophes as well*' (my hysterics).

This is ominous, particularly since it follows a table – Table 17, 1985 Technological Crises – which includes a number of remarkable hazards such as, listed under *7, Bizarre Issues*, 'Life and death or other control of "outlaw" societies which have not yet committed any traditional crime.' Does he mean Wales or the Penthouse Club?

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Among this week's contributors:

The revised edition of HUGH THOMAS's *The Spanish Civil War* appeared in January this year; *John Strachey* appeared in 1973.

BOB SHAW's latest novel, *Medusa's Children*, has just been published by Gollancz.

CHRISTOPHER PRIEST's most recent novel was *The Space Machine.*

BRIAN ALDISS has this week been given the James Blish award for excellence in science fiction criticism 1974-1976.

The Best of J. G. BALLARD is published this month by Futura.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK's next book, *Gloriana or the Unfulfilled Queen*, is to be published by Collins.

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Christopher Priest

Theme Games

Souls in Metal edited by MIKE ASHLEY *Hale* £3.50

Tomorrow, Inc. edited by MARTIN HARRY GREENBERG and JOSEPH D. OLANDER *Robson* £3.75

The metaphors of science fiction are exotic, futuristic and disconcerting – fantastic, in a word – and although sf usually has much concern with plot and narrative, the ideas it presents are no less metaphorical for that. This is something the writers are familiar with, but it is a point lost on many observers of science fiction, with the result that the work is sought after or avoided (depending on taste) for its ideas, concepts, etc., regardless of anything else. Thus, gauche and ill-written books, with nothing to commend them except a gimmicky notion or two, become highly regarded and much quoted. A lesser result is that sf short stories are frequently collected in volumes with 'themes', so restoring to print very old stories that weren't up to much even when they were new. Science fiction stories about spaceships, about immortality, about women, about Wandering Jews and Godless Gentiles, about anything, in fact, so long as it isn't about excellence of writing; an American critic recently predicted the inevitable publication of a volume called 'Best Sf Stories About Breakfast Food'.

Mike Ashley, whose *Souls in Metal* is an anthology 'about' robots, is described by his publisher's blurb as an enthusiast; an adroit choice of word. The science fiction enthusiast (not to be confused with the science fiction *fan*, an altogether different proposition) has several distinguishing traits, some of which seem to be shared by Mr Ashley. The enthusiast likes anything and everything, so long as it is labelled 'sf'. He has an unswerving loyalty to classical science fiction (definition: anything published more than 20 years ago and read by more than one person). The enthusiast's own writing is full of titles and dates and names, and the words which join up all this. Sam Moskowitz, a leading American enthusiast, has become a legend in his own time for saying things like 'concepts the mind cannot stomach'. In this book Mr Ashley tells us that the stories have been 'culled' from the 'spectrum' of science fiction; 'with such stories as these flying off at adventurous tangents,' he says while introducing Isaac Asimov, 'it was evident they needed a shepherd to exercise some control'.

All but two of the stories (by Asimov and Simak respectively) obey the 20-year rule. One feels, charitably, that they probably read well enough in their day, but because they are republished in 1977 they ought to meet today's standards. Witness, for example, this piece of ingenuous sexism from Lester del Rey's *Helen O'Loy*:

> I took Helen on a shopping trip to Hudson and she giggled and purred over the wisps of silk and glassheen that were the fashion, tried on endless hats, and conducted herself as any normal girl might. We went trout fishing for a day, where she proved to be as good a sport and as sensibly silent as a man.

I can't decide whether this is mitigated or compounded by the fact that Ms O'Loy is a robot, built to the fantasy-wishes of All-American males.

The rest of the stories run the full 'spectrum' from mediocre to middling, classics every one. Slightly above par is Henry Kuttner's *The Twonky* for being genuinely funny, Philip Dick's *Imposter* for the clues it contains to what his later work was to become, and Brian Aldiss's *Who Can Replace a Man?* Most have been anthologised before, in earlier permutations of the theme-game, so what is the book for? To tell us about robot stories? Back to the enthusiastic gushings of Mr Ashley: 'The door was now open for other sf writers to experiment and develop this theme, and towards the close of the 1930s the robot story reached an admirable peak.' One concludes that one isn't very interested in robot stories after all.

If Messrs Greenberg and Olander are enthusiasts they are concealing it well, for the editorial matter in *Tomorrow, Inc.* has none of the solecisms of the Ashley book; indeed, it is written with intimidating efficiency, if not clarity. Although sub-titled 'Sf Stories About Big Business', their book is less concerned with business practice than you might suppose. The selected stories are actually about (and this time the preposition is used accurately) the structure and effects of business: consumerism, capitalism, dehumanisation, despair. Of course Frederik Pohl is here, anticipating Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* by three years, with *The Tunnel Under the World.* And Robert Sheckley, too, whose black comedies about enterprising individualists standing up to an exploitative system are neatly summed up by *Something for Nothing.*

These stories, and many others, are classics, in the enthusiast's meaning of the word, but in truth they are worthier of the name. Some recent stories, too: four from the Sixties, one even from 1974. Perhaps it was this that made me feel the book was more relevant to the world I know than the foregoing escapist nonsense about metal men, or perhaps it was simply that the stories were better written, better told, more perceptively and wittily observed. Take this exchange from the best story in the book, J. G. Ballard's *The Subliminal Man*:

> 'If we do invite a guest here how much time is he going to spend alone in his room watching television? Judith, we've got to call a halt. It's not as if these things were free, or even cheap. Anyway, television is a total waste of time. There's only one programme. It's ridiculous to have four sets.'
> 'Robert, there are *four* channels.'
> 'But only the commercials are different.'

We know Ballard is using an extreme, even absurb, metaphor, but a feeling we recognise and share is there. Mike Ashley . . . or Greenberg and Olander? The commercials are the same, but the channels are different.

The Peculiar Exploits of Brigadier Ffellowes

Who is Brigadier Ffellowes? To quote one of his listeners at the club, 'He seems to have served in every branch of HM forces at one time or another, including Intelligence.' The Brigadier himself will admit only to an artillery commission, yet none of his stories has anything to do with artillery.

by Sterling E. Lanier author of 'Hieros Journey'/ April 25 Sidgwick & Jackson £3.50

The Peculiar Exploits of Brigadier Ffellowes

Ffellowes is a catalyst, a focal point for dark forces, a man to whom things happen. Wherever he goes, on holiday or on routine business, he enters a world most people never see, except in their darkest dreams.

by Sterling E. Lanier author of 'Hieros Journey'/ April 25 Sidgwick & Jackson £3.50

The Peculiar Exploits of Brigadier Ffellowes

His iron nerve and years of experience are his only defence against the forces and beings that prowl the lost fringes of the world. Ffellowes has tackled powers beyond any physical law, powers whose aim is to obliterate the human spirit.

by Sterling E. Lanier author of 'Hieros Journey'/ April 25 Sidgwick & Jackson £3.50

The Peculiar Exploits of Brigadier Ffellowes

Some members of the club are inclined to scoff when the retired, bluff soldier tells his stories. But, as the tale unfolds, the room silences, the listeners tense; they cannot believe what they are hearing, but they cannot stop listening either . . .

by Sterling E. Lanier author of 'Hieros Journey'/ April 25 Sidgwick & Jackson £3.50

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

John Spurling

Angels East and West

Late Gothic Art from Cologne *National Gallery, until 1 June*
Utamaro *Wildenstein, until 22 April*

Cologne, in the 15th century, was the most densely populated city in Germany, the largest in area in Europe, a leader of the Hanseatic League and one of the great northern centres of art production. It was governed by its guilds, who had ousted the aristocracy a century earlier and now used their confiscated wealth to build a new tower for the Town Hall. The artists' guild ran a semi-closed shop: 'No man from outside Cologne can enter this guild without giving proof of his abilities, and without first paying his membership fee.' It also regulated the quality of the artists' materials.

The value of both these regulations is sufficiently demonstrated by the National Gallery exhibition. The three rooms containing the exhibits – paintings, wooden sculpture, stained glass, illuminated manuscripts and embroidery, mostly lent by Cologne museums – are fairly dark, with high spotlights picking out each item separately. One's first impression is of the sumptuous colours and of how well they have lasted; one's second, that artists as good as this and with such untroubled respect for tradition should have had no problem finding their membership fee. Their names, with one exception, are lost and this seems right and proper – there are no deviants here, no strivers after renaissance or depicters of the lonely fate of individual man. This is the Middle Ages still, social, hieratic, unquestioning. Of course there is considerable individuality both of skill and design, and the scholar can exercise his ingenuity in sorting out the works done by one anonymous master from those by another or his studio, but the late Gothic collective rules.

This may sound a cheap way to approach a beautiful and rare exhibition, but the fact is that we cannot simply treat these thing as *objets d'art*. Every one of them was made for the same purpose, to be seen in church or private chapel, to serve as an aid to medieval Christian worship. There is a strange dichotomy here: against the rich colours, the gorgeous gowns, elegant footwear, delicate fingers, calm backgrounds of towns and landscapes, and the seductive refinement with which they are painted, we have to set the faces and the poses of the figures which dominate the paintings. There is not a single smiling face, except those of the men flogging Christ in one of the six panels of *The Large Passion* by 'The Master of St Lawrence'; there is not a body which is not in some way bowed or suppliant, except of course those of the villains, the Prefect of Rome about to griddle St Lawrence or the Huns massacring St Ursula and the 11,000 British virgins.

But isn't this precisely the Gothic style, the essence of medieval Christianity? No one could call the artists dishonest, piling up the suffering Christs, the weeping Marys, the grave martyrs holding the symbols of their torture and dispatch, just to please the donors, whose equally gloomy if more stolid expressions and postures fill up the bottom corners; the artists fully believe their faith is a sad one or they would not convey the feeling so powerfully to the spectator. The gulf lies between their art which, already responding technically though not ideologically to the sophistication of the Renaissance, glorifies this world and their faith which denies it – in effect a tussle between the figures and what they are surrounded by and clothed in. In a painting such as *The Conversion of St Hubert*, where the erstwhile huntsman, kneeling in his orange and gold brocaded surcoat before a stag bearing a crucifix between its antlers, is only the focal point of a broad and deep landscape occupied by other men still hunting and whose foreground also contains Hubert's non-committal servant and two lively horses, the balance is held. Hubert remains a human being undergoing an experience of spiritual exaltation. But in many of the more saint-saturated paintings the figures seem emptied of their humanity, reverent blanks, while in *St Maurice and His Companions*, the exotic closely-fitting gold and silver suits of armour, the magnificent accoutrements, the thickly waved hairstyles and the very individuality of the faces sort uneasily with their expressions of passive devotion. This brotherly band of soldiers of Christ looks outrageously camp.

The wooden sculptures are different. Perhaps because the colours have faded or flaked off, emphasising line, material and structure, there is less sense of luxury about them. The sculptors' ends and means are not divided: the suppleness of the bodies, the quiet curves and folds of the drapery seem all one with the gentle gestures and the sweet other-worldly expressions. Even St Jerome, a monster in real life and often a rather headmasterly figure in paintings, here in a monumental limewood carving bends towards his dog-sized lion with touching sympathy. But there are two large angels, probably made to stand outside a confessional, which go further. Their eyes look steadily down at you from open, bi-sexual, half-childish faces with archaic smiles – the mouths turning neither up nor down. They are wonderfully carved and their red and blue cloaks and wings are still quite brightly coloured, but their gaze is disconcerting. You do not, frankly, care to examine their artistic points too closely. They were not intended to be appraised in that spirit but to look at you and draw your attention with one relaxed finger to the texts written on scrolls across their midriffs: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

The only depiction of an angel I have come across which had the same effect on me – awe and charm in equal parts – is the one in the Japanese play *Hagoromo*, whose feathered robe is found by a fisherman and who dances for its return. This angel's feathers form the pattern of the *obi* or sash of the so-called *Femme voluptueuse* (the exhibition at Wildenstein comes from Paris) by the 18th-century Japanese woodcut artist, Utamaro. Portrayed half-length, her blue patterned kimono falling off the left shoulder to reveal half a breast, her hands idly occupied with the slippery draperies, while she stares levelly across the bare shoulder at somebody beyond the edge of the picture, she might seem to be at the furthest remove from angels, saints and Gothic *tristesse*. Utamaro indeed, the precursor of Degas, Beardsley and Bonnard, is famed as the great master of *ukiyoe*, the passing show of the world, in his case a show almost wholly confined to the extreme elegance of the courtesan, coming from the bath, playing with her baby, taking tea, combing her hair in front of a mirror or, in the erotic pillow-books, in the act of coupling. But although their activities are commonplace and transitory, the beauty of these women under their mountains of black hair, whose huge yellow pins point in all directions like constructional elements of a Suprematist painting, is decidedly otherworldly. The colours are flat and clear, complicated by pattern and changes of tone, the line bold, the overall design intricate and fluid. It is an intellectual more than a sensual beauty, yet the faces themselves, like that of the Nō angel, are masks, all with the same arched eyebrows, slit eyes, straight noses and tiny pink 'v' mouths, sometimes opened enough to show the teeth. Expression is conveyed in the set of the head and the pose of the body.

The *femme voluptueuse*, in other words, is individual only in her momentary action of turning the head. Everything else about her belongs to the ideal. The symbolic text round her waist may carry no Christian injunction to repentance but implies an unequivocally dim view of 'the sorrowful men of the world'.

Radio

Eric Korn

Prophet and Loss

'In the last thousand years of Western Culture, how much would the elites have liked the world two hundred years later?' ruminated Herman Kahn (*Nation to Nation*, Radio 4), and would not stop for an answer. Elites, almost by definition, think that the world is going to hell in a handbasket: Renaissance Spain, celebrated in a seven-

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hour spectacular on Radio 3, was full of justified doubts about the status remaining quo; exhilarating to think that we may be someone's Golden Age.

The elites of 1777 might have been favourably surprised by the volume of institutional religiosity about this week, albeit some took strange forms: Michael Hammill meditated on his fingers (*Me Out There*, Radio 3), full of holy puns and virtuoso facetiousness: 'When you ring my finger do you ring out the bells or do you wring my neck . . . a millstone or a milky way . . . middle finger, longfellow, who walks tall – who can walk tall? One outstretched by love and suffering . . .' he stopped, or was stopped, before he could do the toes and tell us where each little piggy went. Michael Ffinch's meditation, *Simon's Garden* (Radio 4), was full of faded topicalities and holy doggerel: 'Those who are strong must nurture need/if good is God then good must bleed . . .', a chip from the old *Rock*. More eccentrically John Eidinow (*Judas – the Case for the Defence*) skirted the Borgesian metaphysics, reordered the evidence to present a naïve enthusiast, rushing to the Rabbinate to report the good news; appalled to find that he has provided the evidence for a heresy charge, he commits suicide so he can't be called as a witness. Two thousand years of the Warren Commission, and reverent fun for all.

Too much fun and too little reverence afflicted Radio 4's version of David Benedictus's *Betjemania*, reducing the Laureate's real acerbities to mere Hums of Pooh. A few poems, produced as acrid cabaret numbers instead of end-of-pier romps, succeeded nearly as well as they do when Sir John reads them without any accompaniment. Gabriel Josipovici, another apparent natural for radio, was another disappointment. *The Present* (Radio 4) with its scenelets of triangular claustophobia ('nougat, O God, nougat, O God') severed by plangent twangs, its Priestleyan Inspector and shattered time sequence, was also a non-starter.

Elites of any century would be ashamed to be as ignorant of any of Britain's other superheroes as we were – no doubt fairly – assumed to be of Newton (*Let Newton Be*, Radio 3). He was presented as the prototype absent-minded professor, forgetting to eat, writing pathetic weird letters to Pepys and Locke, his prophetic studies an aberration, his alchemy tactfully ignored, his achievements inscrutable. The consequences of science as a mystery religion were displayed in the next programme in this series, which dealt with the strange affair of the Mayor of Cambridge, Mass., who reckoned that the time had come to call a halt to all this meddling with providence. Genetic recombination techniques only do directly and powerfully what breeders have been doing indirectly for centuries, but Eduardo Velucci, quite rightly, wasn't about to have any malignant mutant come boiling out of Harvard or MIT without its being examined by a Review Board. One scientist was heard blackguarding a colleague for showing, publicly, less than confident certitude.

Which brings us back to Herman Kahn and his co-futurologists. Confident certitude is the last thing one feels, hearing a Fellow of the Wilkins Micawber Institute for the study of Perpetual Plenty at loggerheads with the Jeremiah Professor of Imminent Doom. Energy problems will either cause the planet to boil or freeze in the next century, or will not. Mineral resources will last a hundred million years or three weeks. For Kahn, futurology was 'first and foremost fun – and if I want to have fun that way it's my privilege,' but his serious purpose was to ensure a proper image of the future – 'if you believe you are using up your grandchildren's resources you live in a sick society' – and to urge us to prepare now for the leisure explosion of the 2100s. Johann Galtung, pointing out that Roman futurologists probably worried about the over-exploitation of the supply of gladiators, considered that the serious purpose of Herman Kahn was to remove the excuse of apocalyptic despair so we could concentrate on current problems. Kahn reckoned they would solve themselves. As for fuel shortages, something called unconventional gas will get us out of that hole. I shouldn't be surprised if it did.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Holocaustic

Strawberry Fields *Cottesloe*

'A lot of people think like this, people my age,' declares the boy-Fascist in *Strawberry Fields*; and if recent events at Stechford are to be credited, he has a point. The National Front is at last able to proclaim that it appeals to the young and disgruntled as well as the old and disgruntled. We shall, no doubt, be hearing much more of such excrescences in the coming years, conceivably even of some like the English People's Party slyly postulated by Stephen Poliakoff here. It seems unexceptionable when you first breeze through its bumf. Indeed, the stuff about the desecration of the countryside and the plight of the inner cities will sound positively high-minded to anyone still reeling from contact with Poliakoff's world of three-lane carriageways, multi-storey car parks, juke boxes, greasy bangers and plastic tomatoes. It is not until some way into the play that we begin to realise that these people believe blacks, too, to be subtopian eyesores, ugly blots on our green and pleasant land. The conservation movement is broadly respected by liberals with reason, and I'd always thought of Poliakoff as one of its more dedicated disciples. What he does here is remind us, and perhaps himself, that it is essentially reactionary and potentially baleful: not everyone who loves England, has an ear for her music, thrills to the slow movement of clouds in benediction and the rest of it, has to share the political convictions of a Cecil Day Lewis.

A picture begins to form of bigwigs from the Council for the Preservation of Rural England strutting along the bridleways in jackboots, *Mein Kampf* nestled beside Pevsner in their tweed overcoats. But Poliakoff doesn't go that far. His embryo Nazis are just two. One is Kevin, who grew up in the giddy 1960s, finds the Seventies drab and disappointing, and might now be described as a dropped-out drop-out; and the other Charlotte, an upper-crust girl from the Garden of England, a Kentish rose with a stem of steel. Together they trek north through the jerry-built jungle: from a grotty motorway café, with remnants of egg glued to the formica table-tops, to a coach station in Nottingham, where a middle-aged lady presents them with money and (inexplicably) wire, and then to a hamburger stall somewhere in the bleak moonscape of Doncaster. Here, Charlotte coolly plugs a passing policeman with her revolver, and the rest of the play involves her and Kevin's attempts to elude the encircling law and hotfoot it to Scotland. What they are to do among the banks and braes is left vague, but it would be odd if it had nothing to do with bombs and violence. As Charlotte says, the leaders of the National Front are 'pathetic nonentities': her party intends to be much more effective.

Part of the reason it is hard to take Mr Poliakoff's fable altogether seriously is, I suppose, its implausibility. Why should these fanatics imperil their wily schemes by picking up a hitch-hiker, as they do, and why should the hitch-hiker not manage to escape after the cop-slaying? Why except to ensure that there is a sceptical voice to swap dialogue with the principals and perpetuate the plot? But there were also times when I wondered if Poliakoff was really writing his own play, and not one imposed on him by edict of Howard Brenton, Howard Barker, David Hare, or another of the playwrights self-described recently as a 'group' whose every scene contains some intimation of approaching upheaval and cataclysm. Certainly, the shadow of Weimar sprawls rather obtrusively across the pock-marked landscape. Kevin casually talks of the day 'the holocaust comes', and Charlotte, more specifically, prophesies civil war within two years. 'A lot of people may experience it, too,' she sighs, fondling the pistol in her handbag, 'having to shoot someone, seeing them fall.' Maybe it was the self-consciousness, the stiltedness, the melodramatic timbre, the sheer secondhandness of lines like this that left me complacently concluding that, however overwrought Mr Poliakoff himself might become, the rest of his fellow-citizens would somehow muddle through.

The truth is that futuristic fantasies need to be firmly earthed if they are not to appear paranoid; and Mr Poliakoff's political fore-

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bodings are not. His main characters seem to puzzle him, as well as they might. Jane Asher brings a serene disdain to Charlotte, and does well with an improbable but clearly central speech in which she describes plunging head and body beneath a glutinous splurge of mud and tar in order to prove she could 'face anything'; and Stephen Rea, for once sacrificing his customary Ulster for a chipper Cockney, plays the half-blind, half-mad Kevin in a satisfactorily wonky and feverish way. But somehow they seem cerebrally conceived and thinly executed, wispier presences than far lesser characters, like the fussy lady in the cavernous bus-terminal or the garrulous waitress at the oily eatery. They are alien to Poliakoff, and he does not understand either them or, one feels, the genesis of right-wing terrorism. After work as sharp-eyed, sharp-eared, sharp-minded and sharp-tongued as *Hitting Town* and *City Sugar*, this can't be reckoned much more than a talented disappointment.

Films

John Coleman

Life Studies

Frederick Wiseman Season *The Other Cinema until 21 April*
The Man on the Roof *Academy Two*
Pleasure at Her Majesty's *Academy Three*

One more time. Frederick Wiseman is a thunderously quiet American, an amiable, rumple-faced, inquisitive professor of law from Boston, who turned to film-making a decade ago, since when he has put together 10 stunning studies of transatlantic institutions. The titles mostly speak for themselves: *High School*, *Law and Order*, *Hospital*, *Basic Training*, *Juvenile Court*, *Primate* and *Meat* (these are those in the current, bold but brief season at 25 Tottenham Street – missing are *Titicut Follies*, Wiseman's first, a look at an insane asylum and still banned; *Essene*, a marvellous entry into a quarrelsome monastic community; and *Welfare*). His documents are exceptional in several ways. For instance, the *cinéma-vérité* of showbiz personalities – which may include anyone from Jane Fonda to a black man in a condemned cell to a Canadian lady with quins – is, however hazardous, always easier of access than that of hitherto shuttered enclaves; yet somehow Wiseman does more than come in close to WASP education, police routine, professional medicine, military indoctrination, judiciary processes, monks' tantrums or whatever, with their implicit amateur casts of tens of hundreds: as seen on TV's *Omnibus* last week, expressing an authentic bemusement, this Wiseman gets into such touchy sanctuaries with the active consent of controlling adults. Are his makings, then, so bland, so cautiously balanced as to render them inoffensive, i.e. uncritical?

The short answer is no. He regards his chosen area of life with one beady, one auspicious eye. And he allows himself scope for shaping. Unsparing of film stock he is said to shoot, on occasion, at a ratio as high as 70 to 1 – another of his out-of-the-ordinary approaches: he must edit to the bone. Yet nothing so skeletal emerges. There is gristle, tissue, even an indulgence in fat, on everything I have watched of his, certainly – to trick with the metaphor – on his latest, *Meat*, some critics' poison in that it is less about a formative environment than a central substance; less about a place than a product. In the facts, of course, it shows people both operating and operated on as richly as all his works. The 10,000 cattle and sheep numbly foddered, slaughtered, skinned, hacked and reduced to steaks, joints, hamburgers at a giant packing plant in Colorado may be horror-movie stuff for us outsiders who merely consume the results, but they are everyday objects – not corpses – to the humans who slit and gut them, reach in a roomful of phones for best bids, set the wheels of commerce rolling. Hard to decide where the greater surrealism lies: in the (mercifully black-and-white) bland ritual of killing – a Judas-beast leading a line of lambs to quick death – or in the antics of workers and management: a thoroughly severe wages dispute, prole-tough against white-collar-tough. One sees how Wiseman swings his magical permits. All depends on the opinions you already bring to the viewing: he may enlarge one's imaginative boundaries; he is unlikely to provide a real border incident. This is high cunning.

And there is always the business of that apparent fat, the entertaining extras. In *Meat*, the camera turned long enough to trap a crazy interlude – a drawling, dreamy drum-majorette of a guide utterly losing her interpreter as she chants statistics to a troupe of visiting Japanese. Milos Forman couldn't have directed life better. Unless you are one of those metropolitan persons who picks up the NS on a Thursday, *Meat* (7 p.m., 14 April) will have returned to its cans by the time you read this, alas. But that is no reason for my not plugging it; and, anyway, it would be madness not to take this praise as a trailer for the munificent rest of the Wisemans. That our home telly should remain so reticent about buying his output *en bloc*, giving it the hardest of sells and then leaning back to count the ratings – and this after that interview, with chips, on *Omnibus* ('for all', Latin) – continues to pass my understanding, no light manoeuvre.

It is appropriate that the Academy should display the newest film from the delicate Swedish director, Bo Widerberg, he who has brought off such highwire feats as *Raven's End*, *Elvira Madigan* and *Adalen '31* (*Joe Hill* and *Stubby* I am less enthusiastic about): anyone who has been as good as Widerberg at his best can never be all bad. But *The Man on the Roof* is disappointingly obvious, even borrowed from the by now universal lending library of fuzz-and-snipers clichés. A brutal, hospitalised police inspector is bloodily bayoneted to death. A fair assortment of cops – the worldweary fatty, the patient minion, the eager youngsters – go rather dispiritedly on the whole (and this makes for sense and interest) after the unknown assassin. There is a slam-bang finale, with helicopters and excellent manipulation of crowds and camera, as the murderer-with-a-grudge pops off at anything in uniform from a tall, central Stockholm building. Pop up, rather, to Academy Three, where *Pleasure at Her Majesty's* – Roger Graef's record of our very own British satirists, mainly Oxbridge-nurtured, commingling for a couple of Amnesty concerts – proves two things: that the warmly remembered funnier bits from *Beyond the Fringe*, *The Goodies*, *Monty Python* (fake-Shakespeare, the dead parrot sketch) quite hold their heat; and that there is an engaging sweetness, a near-hero-worshipping shyness about some members of rival comic gangs meeting for the first time during rehearsal. Gosh.

Television

Ian Hamilton

A Star is Born

The *Sunday Times* has done its best to spoil the *Roots* 'phenomenon' for British fans, but did they really have to send a sleuth into the jungle in order to cast doubts on Alex Haley's genealogy? It would have been enough, surely, to have glanced at the first few pages of his mighty work. Here, they would have seen, is no plodding servant of the facts, but a man strangely chosen to 'imagine' what history was like, a man – in other words – of *Insight*. Like any decent writer for the *Sunday Times*, Haley always knows what people had for breakfast:

> Each man, back in his own hut, accepted a calabash of porridge from his wife. Returning to their kitchens in the rear of the compound, the wives fed next their children, and finally themselves.

The fateful day in question was the birth day of Haley's remote ancestor, Kunta Kinte, some time in the early spring of 1750. Haley knows exactly who was present at the birth and that they 'laughed with joy' on the appearance of this comely 'manchild' – perhaps sensing, in their dark, instinctive way that some day he'd turn out to be a coast-to-coast smash hit. Haley also has the complete guest list for the child's naming ceremony and full, finger-lickin' details of the menu. He's pretty sure-footed too on What it Felt Like to Be There:

> Out under the moon and stars, alone with his son that eighth night, Omoro completed the naming ritual. Carrying little Kunta in his strong arms, he walked to the edge of the village, lifted his baby up with his face to the heavens, and said softly 'Fend kiling dorong leh warrata ka iteh tee' (Behold – the only thing greater than yourself).

We have no idea what Allah feels about having his devout black villagers speak in New Testament prose, but with *Jesus of Nazareth* hotly competing on the other channel he's probably prepared to settle for what he can get. *Roots* (BBC-1) began on Good Friday and had almost the whole of Easter to propose its infidel attractions before J.C. made His second big appearance

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on the Sunday. Piously, I restricted myself to one instalment of the black saga – it ran from Kunta's birth, through his 'manhood training' (which ex-National Servicemen would have recognised as being just like Basic Training, except that our *kintangos* never went so far as to take a bayonet to our *fotos*) to his capture by slavers and his uncomfortable sea voyage to the States.

Haley's (may one call it?) missionary aim with *Roots* is to give US blacks a sense of dignity, and every villager in sight thus had erect bearing, nobly tilted jaw, clear, thoughtful eyes. They were diligent, athletic, obedient to tradition but not in the least craven; they worked hard but off duty they would frolic wholesomely to the strains of Quincy Jones. Compare and contrast the seedy, foul-mouthed slave drivers who interrupt this jungle idyll with their iron shackles, their round shoulders and bad teeth, and *then* ask yourself who's closer to the monkeys. This chocolate-box version of their history has, we're told, enraptured the consciences of white America; the blacks, presumably, must be enjoying *that* spectacle more even than the show itself.

The first instalment of John Arlott and Freddie Truman's new series on *The Noblest Game* bore rather too much of a resemblance to Arlott's own recent programme on the Centenary Test: the same reverential tour of Lords, the same mini-tributes to more or less the same great players of the past. The novelty was in seeing Truman walking on awed tip-toe down those famed corridors, fully equipped with reminiscing briar and an accent more Arlott-ish than Tees-side. What is it about cricket that encourages high-falutin abstract thought? Is it during the gaps between overs that its fans reflect upon the verities? Arlott, for the umpteenth time, was here to be found mumbling haphazardly about 'a moral influence . . . a formative influence physically, mentally . . . and perhaps psychologically . . . but even as a game it had exhibited an immense diversity'. *Even* as a game? But John, I mean, I thought that's what it was; mainly, I mean.

I've never managed to see a whole instalment of the comedy show *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*, so I'm not sure whether Frank Spencer is clinically retarded or with effort could snap out of it. Knowing a bit more about his medical history might help one to strike the correct attitude towards this character's coy gormlessness. Falsetto bewilderment seems to be Spencer's usual response to all that falls about his ears, but – as with Jerry Lewis in the old days – there is evidently meant to be something winning in his little-boy-lost uselessness. Michael Crawford, who plays the part, clearly believes there is: 'I analysed him a bit and found he was childlike,' Crawford piped in BBC-1's *To Be Perfectly Frank*, and one could almost hear the studio fall silent with respect. Not only could Crawford fall on his face, drive cars along pavements and hang by his feet from high buildings; he could also think a bit. This trifling study was saturated with the wish to make a hero of its star; now and again, to give him credit, Crawford looked approximately sheepish.

As a follow-up to *The Price of Coal*, BBC-2's *Dan, Badger and All the Coal* inevitably looked cursory and low-budget. In fact, it was a faintly touching little tale about a miner who gets transferred from working some fancy, nuclear-powered bit of machinery to looking after an old pit-horse. At first contemptuous of the nag, he gradually gets fond of it and thus learns a bit of respect for the way things used to be down t'pit. Something a bit wrong about the ending, though, which shows our man asking for riding lessons from a girl who's dressed like Princess Anne.

Opera

John Morgan

I Devolutioni

I Masnadieri and **The Barber of Seville**
Welsh National Opera

Just my fortune, though whether good or bad I'm uncertain, to visit the opera of the beloved country and find it at its most baffling. The company was under some strain since its drama section, under much the same management as the opera, had just been given a sharp crack on the head by the Arts Council, so that the Cardiff air was loud not only with the sound of music, but with that cultivated snarling which marks Welsh cultural life from time to time. Even so, why should it be that a company which can present perhaps the most brilliant *Barber of Seville* of modern times, can also offer us an early Verdi opera which, in these hard days, really does not deserve such an expense of good singers, orchestra, designers and great chorus out of public funds? An opera house is an expensive place in which to indulge the education of a Verdi scholar, and many such, indeed, enjoyed it. There could, though, be an explanation of its choice which has nothing to do with the company's notable Verdian tradition. This lies in the opening page of the awful libretto, which bears a remarkable resemblance to phrases in the Welsh National Anthem, 'Land of my Fathers', The word freedom also figures. Could it then be that the management were of the view that the Devolution Bill would have passed through the Commons by opening night and that this would have been a memorable patriotic occasion? Local critics might try suggesting that a similar lack of nous has been shown in the more serious cultural politics of Cardiff.

One of the many remarkable features of the *Barber* is that it is William Gaskill's first operatic production. What a pleasure it would be if he were to abandon the theatre for this more important kind of work. He demonstrates that he possesses, unlike so many producers, the essential quality: to wit, inspired modesty. Along with Stendhal, he manifestly believes that Rossini needs presenting, not obscuring, and so, with the young conductor Wyn Davies and excellent orchestra in cahoots, all the musical as well as dramatic jokes work perfectly.

Obviously it was a help to have a cast that was not exactly drawn out of a hat. John Brecknock – the racehorse we are following – sang the Count, Thomas Hemsley Bartolo, Thomas Allen Figaro, Della Jones Rosina. There will be a few cast changes as the production sets off in the next two months to Bristol, Swansea, Oxford and Llandudno, but none, I suspect, are likely to change the quality of performance much since the production exemplifies, as does the smaller Kent company, that exhilarating sense of the unified pleasure of a great work presented to perfection. The sets and lighting, for example, by William Dudley and Gareth Jones, exhibit the intellectual concentration which the need for economy does not necessarily have to diminish. Illusion is preserved at a quarter the cost by wit and invention. No one who, like myself, makes a living out of any form of show business can argue with too much conviction for the virtues of economy; and clearly a *Barber* with such singers cannot be regarded as a cheap production. All the same, it is a step forward for British opera to see that the best is possible without extravagance.

Jazz

Charles Fox

Do It Yourself

Jazz at the Shaw

Tradition can take the most roundabout route. What, for example, could Stalebread Charlie and Warm Gravy, two New Orleans street performers active at the start of the century, possibly have in common with Tony Oxley, percussionist with the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra, or Frank Perry, who appeared at the Shaw Theatre with Keith Tippett's Ark? The answer is home-made instruments. Stalebread's fiddle was concocted from a cigar-box and Warm Gravy used equally humble materials. Perry's equipment, resembling a crystal Aladdin's cave, is usually topped by a set of brandy glasses. Similarly, the devices which enable Tony Oxley to sustain notes or to scrape away with a violin bow seem to be knocked up out of something looking suspiciously like a Meccano set.

Not that Perry's or Oxley's notions of what percussionists should get up to pleased everybody. Ark's set was interrupted by shouts of 'Rubbish' and trudging from the auditorium. True, the music seemed far too vaporous, sprinting up and down a few scales, with much twittering on pipes and only a few soloists – Trevor Watts, Malcolm Griffiths – providing a sharper edge. But the punters' discontent really arose from the fact that they had come to hear Clark Terry's Big Bad Band. They were, in short, musical conservatives of the most rigid kind.

The 'badness' of Terry's band is a matter of black semantics, that logic-chopping

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which turns 'crazy' into a term of approbation. The band's arrangements are predictable, at their handsomest when echoing the warm tone-colours of Ellington. What kept things going were the soloists, especially two saxophonists: Charles Davis, baritone and soprano, and Chris Woods, hard-selling on alto. But real style got provided by Clark Terry himself, once a kingpin in the Ellington and Count Basie orchestras, a cheerful and – rarest of all – a witty virtuoso.

A couple of nights later, another ex-Basieite, Buddy Tate, indulged in genre playing. Tenor saxophonists born in Texas, like Tate, are usually expected to possess a larger-than-life sound and way of phrasing. Relying too much, perhaps, upon lusciousness and muscularity, Tate's playing reflected his own ideas less than that South-Western tradition. Indeed, he frequently got outflanked by Jim Galloway, a saxophonist full of youthful verve.

The homeland kept its end up well, as it happened. Possibly the most interesting music of the week was provided by Axel (the name comes out of Villiers de l'Isle – Adam via Edmund Wilson), five performers, including the pianist Gordon Beck and the saxophonist Tony Coe (doubling on boxwood and bass clarinets), who produces a stimulating mix of patterns and moods. Maybe it's 1960 consensus jazz, a firming-up of avant-garde, a liberalising of mainstream, but it provides the right kind of easy-going formality for these gifted improvisers.

The guitarist Louis Stewart is not British in a technical sense (he was born and lives in Dublin), but he works regularly in London, often, as at the Shaw Theatre, playing duets with the bassist Peter Ind, equally inventive on ballads and bebop tunes. Guitar solos of an even more seamless variety, packed with semiquavers, were offered by Jimmy Raney, an American making a belated first appearance in Britain. He and his son Doug (suffering visibly from 'flu) picked away tidily on two guitars (only some tinkering with Bach went really astray) but the highspot was Raney's unaccompanied solo on 'Smoke Gets In Your Eyes'.

National characteristics still come across, even in jazz. The Polish pianist, Adam Makowicz, threw in licks from Fats Waller and frills from Tatum, yet set – sometimes a bit arbitrarily – within a style that really stemmed from Chopin and Paderewski. A hell-for-leather 'Cherokee' showed off the technique, dazzling to advantage, but Makowicz's encore toppled over the edge, a parody of his own kind of romanticism. Equally obvious was the African identity within the music of Chris McGregor's Blue Notes, kwela consorting with far-out jazz. There were even moments when McGregor sounded as though he were playing a xylophone (very African) rather than a piano. Dudu Pukwana contributed vocal clicks and terse, passionate alto solos, but carried his baiting of the TV cameraman too far.

Another musical element encountered at the Festival was the present-day manifestation of Third Stream, that mingling of jazz and straight techniques. The meetings these days are no longer between Kenton and Tchaikovsky or the MJQ and the baroque tradition, but closer to what goes on at Donaueschingen. Despite that, the line-up of the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra looked disarmingly familiar, with its sections of trumpets, trombones and saxophones. Best of the compositions on display was 'Statements IV' (the telegraphic title is in character as well) by Barry Guy, a string bass virtuoso in both halves of the music. A startling range of timbres got deployed, but with a regard for dynamics (seven brass players would suddenly give way to a deep but lonely tuba note). Outstanding solos came from Paul Rutherford (trombone), David Spence (trumpet) and Alan Sinclair (tuba), the former pair falling back on wa-wa techniques that must have been around when Stalebread Charlie and Warm Gravy first got together years ago. Another example of tradition rearing its cunning head.

Kevin Crossley-Holland

A Wreath

The furled cypress contains it. The breathless
yew. Hulks of elms all over England.

A trail of shadows, everywhere, in the oblique
sunlight. Who does not accept them? Who is not
even grateful for them?

But when the bud . . .

Not one sound can be undone. It is part of the
harmony of the gong.

Look at the water. It sways, catches chips of
light, flashes, sways.

Yet snared by time, all of us, that part of us . . .

Not one stone, one leaf, one flame, one breath.
Whatever begins is eternal.

Where he lies now a moonstone lies, one with flint
and chert and every granule of earth.

And the darkness comprehendeth it not . . .

A moonstone on her throbbing hand. Light in the
stone, life's insignia. Brother of the hawthorn,
the wood-anemone, the breathing, iridescent universe.

In memory of a child who was born and died on 1 June 1976

Weekend Competition

No 2459 Set by Maud Gracechurch

After the Frost-Nixon interview, what next? Russell Harty blandying words with the Marquis de Sade; Parkie trying his luck with Nefertiti; Robin Day putting the heat on Genghis Khan? 200-word limit; entries by 29 April.

No 2456 Set by Pat Blackford

We asked you to go against the grain and write reactionary poems about the joys of being really rich, nasty, chauvinist, snobbish, racist, etc.

Report by Paddy Beesley

Trouble with the Editor again over this one, I'm afraid. He burst through the security doors of the comp complex in a quite unseemly fashion. I tried to persuade him that none of you really meant what you'd written, but he flung me aside and tore at the filing cabinets. Fortunately, it was Blackford's hide, not mine. Anyway, a discreet fiver to the winners, all of whom understood that we were asking for descriptions of smug pleasure rather than hate-filled ravings.

It's all go to Claridges, it's all go the champers,
The Glyndebourne music's such a drag, but
there's always the Fortnum hampers;
We've a town and a country place, of course,
where we keep our gees and doggies,
And we often weekend on the Continent
in spite of the Krauts and Froggies.

Enoch Powell has got it right: deport the
nigs and Pakkis,
The TUC's a bunch of Trots, and their
leaders Moscow lackeys.

We'd give no dole to the unemployed, if
they won't work they're lazy,
We've lots of City directorships, but of what
we're rather hazy.

It's all go to hunt with the Quorn, it's all
go to Ascot,
We've a brand-new Rolls we got as a perk,
with our family crest as a mascot.
The Socialists tax us too much, we've always
voted Tory,
But we'll not say how we made our pile,
for that's another story.

E. O. Parrott

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I'd shoot all commies out of hand and set
the people free.
For no right-winger in the land is more
right-wing than me.
Each member of the National Front's
a long-haired left-wing pouf,
And Vorster's latest liberal stunt is bloody
marxist stuff.

I'd birch and lash and flay and flog
those author chaps obscene,
And castrate every bloody wog to keep
our culture clean.
I'd have all labour unions banned, I'd jail
the TUC,
For no right-winger in the land is more
right-wing than me.

A private army I'd recruit of decent,
loyal chaps,
I'd train them to put in the boot wherever
there's a lapse
From due respect, which I demand, for
each minority,
For no right-winger in the land is more
right-wing than me.

GERRY HAMILL

I grab and grudge and itch and leer
And strut and swagger and scorn and sneer
And drool and bite and suck and screw
And gobble and gorge and swill and spew
And lounge and laze and loaf and slouch
And rage and kick and splutter and grouch
And *I* don't need your analyst's couch.

TOM DONNELLY

I'm stinkingly rich and I love it,
I'm loaded with perks and with pelf.
If you've got a 'good cause' you can shove it;
I'm keeping the lot for myself.

Let the niggers go back where they came from
(Though as servants they're useful and cheap).
Still, I'll give them a wave, all the same, from
My place at the top of the heap.

I've a yacht where my jet-setting friends meet,
Four houses, a beautiful Rolls.
Let the poor scrimp and save to make
ends meet;
Let *their* pips, not mine, squeak, poor souls!

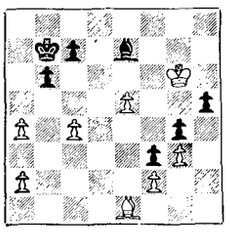
M. GOODRICH

Tony Miles

Chess

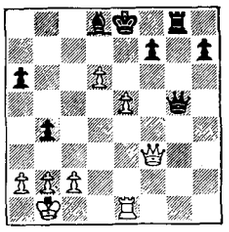
No. 29 **February Problems Contd**

Concluding my summary of the February problems, No. 21 was clearly the most interesting. The position (see diagram) comes from Ree-Zaitsev Chigoin Memorial '76.



White has just played the blunder K(B5)-N6 instead of P-K6 winning. Now **1. . . . P-R5; 2. P x P, B-N5! 3. P-K6**. The alternative is 3. B x B, P-N6 and now (a) 4. P-K6, P-N7? 5. P-K7, P-N8=Qch; 6. K-B7, so (b) 4. P-K6, P x P! 5. P-K7, P-B8=Q; 6. P-K8=Q, Q-N7ch and 7. . . . P-B7 wins. But very interesting, and ignored by most (including Kotov in his notes to the game) is (c) 4. P x P, P-B7; 5. P-K6, P-B8=Q; 6. P-K7, Q-Q6ch; 7. K-B7, Q x Pch; 8. K-N7! and now the best line I could find is . . . Q-N5ch; 9. K-B7, Q-B6ch; 10. K-N7 (not 10. K-K6, Q-R4! 11. K-Q7, Q-B4ch), Q x Pch; 11. K-B7, Q-B5ch; 12. K-N7, Q-K5; 13. K-B7, Q x B! (not Q x RP, 14. P-R3!! – Draw) 14. P-K8=Q, Q x KRP with a won Q+P ending (I think). **3. . . . P-N6; 4. P-K7.** On 4 P x P, B x B wins since white's Ps are weak. **4. . . . B x P.** Not 4. . . . P-N7? 5. B x B! transposing to (b) above. **5. P x P, B-N5! 6. B-B2, B-B4; 7. B-K1? P-B7; 8. B x P, B x B Resigns.** However, white can resist further by 7. K-B5! (as suggested by J. D. Taylor) B x B; 8. K-B4, K-B3; 9. K x P, B-K8(!) (B-Q5!?); 10. P-R5, K-Q3(!) and black should win by bringing his K to the K side. Lines where black goes straight for the QBP are remarkably hazardous and he can easily lose. In any case after 7. K-B5! there is quite a lot of play in the position – a vast improvement on Ree's B-K1 which was equivalent to resignation.

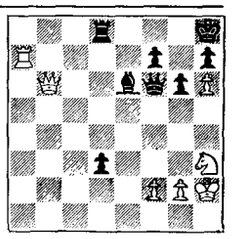
Karpov-Dorfman – USSR Championship '76: Position after suggested 1. . . . B(K2)-Q1. I noticed that Anatoly Karpov, when he was annotating this game recently, described his 1. R(K3)-K1 as a risky try to get a greater advantage than 1. Q-B6ch would give. However he did not mention 1. . . . B-Q1! It seems that white has two good lines.



The sharpest is 2. Q-B6ch, K-B1; 3. Q-Q7! – threatening 4. P-K6, P x P; 5. R-B1ch, B-B3; 6. Q-K7 mate – and if 3. . . . R-N2; 4. P-K6, P x P; 5. R-B1ch, B-B3; 6. Q-B8ch, K-B2; 7. P-Q7, K-N3; 8. Q-K8ch, R-B2; 9. P-Q8=Q winning. So 3. . . . R-N3; 4. R-KB1. Now if 4. . . . B-B3; 5. P x B, Q x P; 6. R-Q1! and the QP is decisive, but 4. . . . R-N2; 5. P-K6, Q-B3! gives black excellent drawing chances e.g. 6. P-K7ch, B x P; 7. P x Bch, Q x P; 8. Q-B8ch, Q-K1 and black is safe. But white has a counter-finesse in 5. P-N3! removing the back rank threats, when black has no constructive move against the threatened P-K6. The attempted change of move order 2. Q-B6ch, K-B1; 3. P-K6, P x P, 4. Q-Q7 is met by 4. . . . B-B3 and if 5. R-KB1, Q-B4! The second winning line is so long that space prohibits any notes The main variation is 1. R-KB1, Q-N3(!) 2. Q-B6ch, K-B1; 3. Q-Q7, K-N2(!); 4. P-K6, Q x P(!); 5. R-N1ch, K-R1; 6. R x Rch, K x R; 7. Q x Bch, K-N2; 8. P-R4! P-N6(!) 9. P x P, Q x NP; 10. Q-N5ch K-B1; 11. Q-K7ch, K-N2; 12. Q-K5ch, P-B3; 13. Q-Q4, Q-QN1; 14. P-Q7, Q-Q1; 15. P-N4, K-B2; 16. P-N5, P x P; 17. P-R5. White wins.

Prizes for the best series of solutions go to N. Neelakantan of Bombay and J. D. Taylor of Newcastle (£15 each) and to J. Gill of Warlingham (£10). The prize for the best single solution is shared by C. J. McSheehy of St. Albans and N. Neelakantan (£5 each).

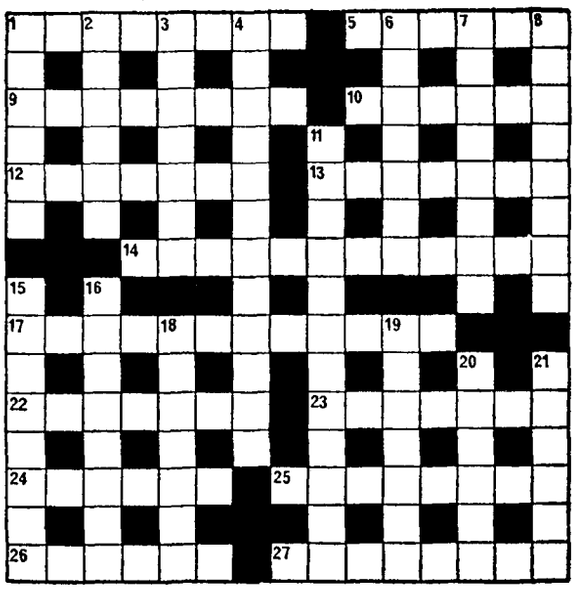
Problem 29:
White to play. How should the game go? Entries to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than Wednesday, 27 April.



Solution to Problem 27:
1. Q-N6! Resigns. The threat is 2. N-B6ch. If 1. . . . P x Q; 2. N-B6 mate. If 1. . . . B x N; 2. B x B, Q-K2; 3. R x P, R x R; 4. R-KB1 wins.

Weekend Crossword 1211

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1211, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 26 April.



ACROSS

1. A bird whether one has to call in or not (8).
5. Money which brings the snood back before a short hair-style (3, 3).
9. Something valuable of mine? (4, 4).
10. If he lost favour, the monkey would remain a bachelor (6).
12. Part of flower which returns everything with love to a fabulous bird (7).
13. Bird roughly put in place (7).
14. Study country smell when on the mend (12).
17. The town for two comedians (12).
22. Greek for a man without a woman (7).
23. Your peg is needed for it hold things in position (7).
24. Complete agreement Bob found in group of workers (6).
25. People are a match for each other in the mind (8).
26. Exactly as an archdeacon in a cathedral city (6).
27. Funny boss eats something not burnt (8).

DOWN

1. Virtuous and spirited crime (6).
2. Scrape about for runners (6).
3. Look after a book for Ivor (7).
4. Considered a maiden to be upset about the publicity (12).
6. In a mess Elba needs backing, so gives authority (7).
7. Opened up fish in place of oysters (8).
8. Money would be the root of evil if the bond were missing (8).
11. Competitions for literate and busy creatures? (8, 4).
15. It keeps things cool, but if it dropped a hundred, the hoe I use would be broken (8).
16. Poet who potentially makes one live near (8).
18. The plant would have to work if the arbitrator were dismissed (7).
19. Unpunctual, yet inside there is preparation for baby (7).
20. One is in the vacant cloakroom (6).
21. Meeting place of Mary and Darnley (6).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1209

N	E	W	C	A	S	T	L	E		D	E	P	T	H
A		E		N		U		M	E		O		U	
I	N	S	I	D	E	R		B	A	N	K	I	N	G
A		T		R		N	A		I		N		H	
D	I	E	G	O		K	I	L	O	M	E	T	R	E
		R		M	E		M				E		N	
K	E	N	N	E	D	Y		S	P	E	A	R	E	D
I			D				R				E			
N	E	W	G	A	T	E		M	A	N	X	M	A	N
G		O			N		A	E		A				
P	E	R	I	M	E	T	E	R		S	W	E	D	E
O		S		E		H		L		T		S		N
S	E	T	T	L	E	R		O	M	I	T	T	E	D
T		E		O		A		W		N		R		E
S	I	D	O	N		L	I	E	G	E	L	O	R	D

Prizewinners to No 1209

Mrs R. Young (Warrington)
Tom Colverson (Kidlington)
Ingrid East (Teddington)

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol. 93 No. 2404

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INDIA — POST-ELECTION: A reaction meeting with Evan Charlton, BBC external service, and Amit Roy an Indian journalist. Thurs. 21 April 6.30 p.m. Focus Group, Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Ave, WC2. 930 6733.

'ACUPUNCTURE' by Dr Michael Cohen, London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terr., W8. Sun. 17 April 7.30p.m. 30p

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Suare, London SW1. Sat. 16 April 3 p.m. 'Open Day'. Tues. 19 April 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. Wed. 20 April 6.30 p.m. Mahayana & Theravada Buddhism – two separate Study Classes. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full programme.

SOCIALIST ENVIRONMENT & Resources Assoc. 'Advertising Politics & Environment'. A discussion led by Ted O'Brien. Asst Sec. NATSOPA. 19 April. Old Red Lion, Rosoman St (nr Angel Tube), EC1. 8 p.m. (Adm. free).

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